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# LOVE AND LIFE

## THE STORY OF J. DENHOLM BRASH

BY HIS SON

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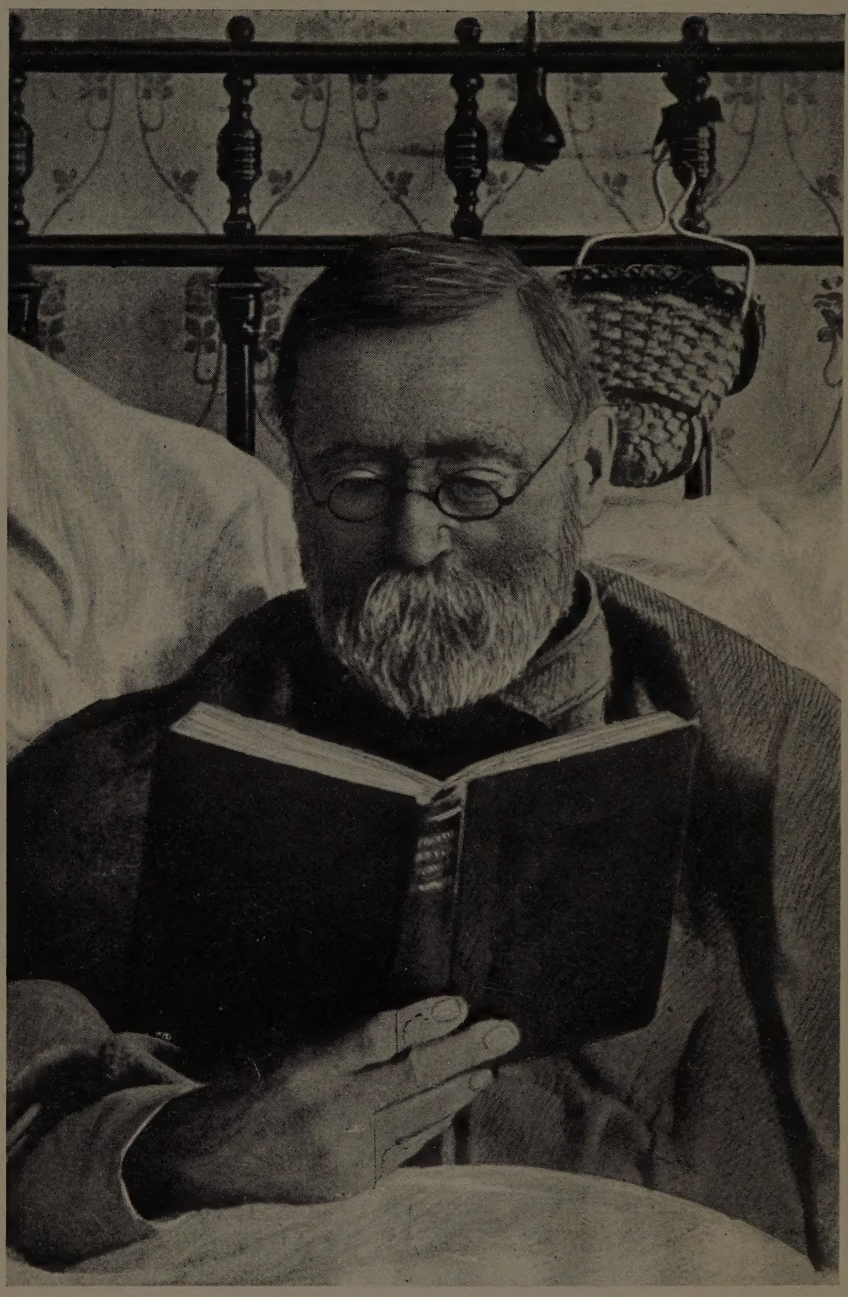

*Photo, R. J. Armstrong, Bristol.*]

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God bless you all.
James Conway
J. Denholm Brash.

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# LOVE AND LIFE

THE STORY OF

J. DENHOLM BRASH

BY

HIS SON

London

CHARLES H. KELLY

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*First Edition, 1913*

TO

MY MOTHER

# PREFACE

I HAVE written this short sketch of my father knowing full well that no pen can picture him. He was so manifold in his activities, so varied in his strangely beautiful life, and yet so central in his supreme loyalty. He once said to me, 'Make sure of your centre, and do not bother about your circumference.' No sentence more truly reveals him. To him the one religion was Love, and everything else in the ecclesiastical world was machinery. He was a Catholic Mystic in the highest sense of those two words. He had the *élan de l'âme*, the fire, the colour, the joy, the vision, the youth, and the spontaneity of the dweller in the Innermost. There was, indeed, 'colour in his soul.' To him Religion was the great romance, and he well knew the meaning of the words, 'Only those capable of Life are capable of God, only those capable of romance are capable of holiness.' When one reads the story of St. Francis, or of Catherine of Genoa, or of Mother Julian, or of John Woolman, or of Mazzini, one can always recall him: for he stands amongst those who have a fiery love for Christ and a yearning pity

for mankind. He often quoted the words of the Roman missionary, Raymond Lullius, 'He that loves not lives not: he that lives by the Life cannot die.' For him the only life was that of the Lover.

Some one well said of him, 'He was a master of the greatest kind of public utterance—barbed speech.' But the arrow was barbed with love, and that is why one does not think of him merely as a preacher of a day, but rather as a herald of the years, for the echoes of love never die. Thus people remember his sermons still, and for many they are timeless. It was his passionate love which gave to him his abundant, sparkling, throbbing, and tingling life. It is thus that he speaks of—Love and Life.

He looked out on the world through the eyes of Love, and that is why it was to him ever beautiful in its infinite variety, and in its amazing friendliness. He lived to be seventy-one as the world counts years, but even then he was Youth and Joy—in the best sense of the words he refused to grow up.

It is easy to find him, for he dwells still in his old haunts. A stretch of beautiful country, a great book, a cricket match, the laughter of a child, and the tears of troubled and broken men and women, bring him vividly before one. On his first birthday after his passing I went a glorious walk upon the Welsh hills. I was quickly joined by my father. Somehow or other

he comes to one in all beautiful places, and he was with me as I saw the shadows chase one another on the mountain-side, as I gazed at the wide-stretching sea, as I heard the peewits calling, as the warm breeze was beating upon my face. We find him in all lovely scenes, and only lose him when we dwell amidst the anxious and wearying selfishness of human life, when our spirits chafe with the desire of worldly things. But in our hours of communion and prayer he comes most closely to us, for that is his 'country of the soul.' It was my mother who said, 'When I pray, my husband takes my prayers to God.' We do not criticize that sentence. We read it as it stands. One of his young grandchildren was looking at his photograph the other day, and said, 'That is not grandfather: it is Jesus.' We know what she meant—we should have worded it in a different way, and said, 'We marvelled, and took knowledge of him, that he had been with Jesus.'

One knows that my father's life is full of message for a restless and self-seeking age. He did not seek to 'manage' men—he loved them. We can see him as he stands and beckons us toward the golden age of the Love which is Life. He had an unfailing medicine for all life's ills, and it was labelled, 'Try Love!' He believed, and lived in the light of the belief, that Love alone was for the healing of the nations. His life beckons us away from the cold cleverness

of a smart age to St. Paul's Hymn of Love; but above all to the One who is—'that tremendous Lover.'

It would be criminal to place upon this Child of God the label of any one denomination: if one did so, my father would at once tear it off, and fling it away. He is of that large family, gathered from every kindred, and tribe, and tongue, who don the same garb—the Livery of Love.

One who never saw him, and never heard of him, has painted his portrait with unconscious, though guided, hand. In *The Mystic Way* we find this description of the tribe in which my father stands.

'The true mystic, indeed, is . . . of the Infinite. . . . From first to last he exhibits all the characteristics of youth. He has the spontaneity, the responsiveness, the instability of youth; experiences all its struggles and astonishment. He is swept by exalted feeling, is capable of ideal vision and quixotic adventures: "there is colour in his soul."' I read the above words after this story was written, but they speak of those things which I have tried to say in this book. He was Mystic, Youth, and Lover: his life was full of surprise, vision, spontaneity, adventure, and—Love. For him to love was to live, and to live was to love.

We take the prayer of my father, and make it our own:

'Love! Love! Love! Oh, to be filled with this Love!'

For it is Love which leads to Wonder, Romance, Adventure, and to all—to that Life which is Life indeed.

. . . . . .

I wish here to thank my father's many friends for the help they have given me. They are too numerous to mention: but to each, and to all, I am deeply grateful. I must, however, mention, with warm thanks, the name of R. Newton Flew, my father's friend and mine, who has so kindly read the proof-sheets of this book.

W. B. B.

*August*, 1913.

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1841 Born in Edinburgh.
1864 Shetland.
1867 Aberdeen.
1868 Manchester (Irwell Street).
1871 Married Miss Bardsley (of Barton).
1871 Nottingham (Halifax Place).
1874 Stockport (Hill Gate).
1877 Leeds (Bramley).
1880 Bacup.
1883 Torquay (Wesley).
1886 Bolton (Wesley).
1889 London (Sutherland Gardens).
1892 Birmingham Mission (North).
1895 Liverpool (Great Homer Street).
1898 Newcastle (Elswick Road).
1901 Newcastle (Dilston Road).
1904 Manchester (Radnor Street).
1907 Bromsgrove.
1908 Handsworth (Super Days—Chap. XII).
1912 'The Ever-Living.'

The children covet to tread in their father's steps; yea, if they do but see any place where the old Pilgrim hath lain, or any print of his foot, it ministereth joy to their hearts, and they covet to lie or tread in the same.

JOHN BUNYAN.

* * *

Love is the amulet which makes the world a garden.

R. L. S.

* * *

He that loves not lives not: he that lives by the Life cannot die.

RAYMOND LULLIUS.

* * *

The greatest of these is Love.

ST. PAUL.

# LOVE AND LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

My father was happily born. He said, with great glee, 'I was born in the Tropics—in Edinburgh—in the tropics of Love.' This was on May 2, 1841. His parents were both Scots, and there was a Breton strain in his father's ancestry. They were lovers of the unconventional and the picturesque in life. The atmosphere of the home was artistic and Bohemian. In it there gathered together those who, while holding to the central truths of religion, scorned without reserve all that savoured of enthusiasm and intensity in the spiritual realm. The father was a man with a soul sensitive to the appeal of beauty, in Art, Letters, and Religion. He was a man of charm, and there was more than a touch of 'raciness' in his character: by profession he was an architect and insurance surveyor, but his heart was in his splendid library and in his home, of which he was passionately fond. The following letter to his sister, written in 1856, on the death of one of his children, will unfold his heart:

Our little Abbie died at 12 o'clock this morning. She was our plaything and pet child; the parting was a sore trial, but both Agnes and I bow to the hand of

God, and I can honestly say that we uttered no murmur in our prayers this morning, but thanked God for the loan, which He had just then re-taken to Himself.

In reading through the old and faded letters of my grandfather, one catches glimpses of the man as he was, full of a tender love for his children, and of a high joy in all that was beautiful. He tells of his visit to a Christmas Mass at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy. 'We could see the whole ceremony: the gorgeous tracing on the altar, the niche with a marble representation of our Saviour in the manger, and the tall, lighted candles; the priest in full vestments; the old nuns hopping slowly about with their black hoods like so many 'hooded crows'; the novices with their white hoods, like religious magpies, all flitting about so silently and stealthily; and the young boarders with their beautiful white lace veils, and sparkling eyes too often seen, appearing like only half-converted Peris looking for Paradise; all was very imposing. The whole was very beautiful, and the music very fine. Beside us sat a young Irish girl, evidently a servant, with hard, red hands, accustomed to scrubbing, who scarcely lifted up her head, but with downcast eyes sat telling her beads, and repeating prayer after prayer to herself with such sincere, reverential feeling, that we could not but admire, and compare her with the foot-scraping, nose-blowing, throat-clearing of an argumentative and self-righteous Scotch Presbyterian.' The letter shows wit and tender-

ness, and the touch of the artist. The writer certainly speaks with a strange insight of the Irish girl.

I well remember my father telling me that once in his boyhood days he was walking in the streets of Edinburgh with his father when they saw a suicide's body being unceremoniously carried to its last resting-place. There were no mourners, so the father said to his boy, 'Take your hat off, Jack, and let us follow the poor devil.' They followed to the cemetery, a distance of some miles. The coffin was thrown into the grave without tears or prayers. Thereupon my grandfather reverently bowed his head, and repeated the words of the Lord's Prayer. 'This,' my father said, 'was the only time I ever heard my father pray in public.' Then they quietly left the cemetery. The story is characteristic, and is a little window which allows us to peep into his life. He was a man with a large soul, quite free from narrowing conventions. One can, to some extent, know the son through the father. They were both men of abandon; there was much colour and warmth in their nature; they both had the eye and ear which gave them the keen appreciation of that which was beautiful in Art and Literature; they both were the friends of 'publicans and sinners.' My grandfather counted among his friends a drunken doctor, a theatrical scene-painter, many artists, and many disciples (of the wilder sort) of Izaak Walton. Amongst

his artist friends was Sam Bough, who is often mentioned in the letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, and some of whose pictures are in the Tate Gallery, and are of great value to-day.

My father told me that when a boy, being alone one day in Bough's studio, he spent his time in painting, and he worked so diligently as to spoil one of the valuable pictures before the artist returned. The genial painter's only remark to my grandfather was, 'No doubt the boy was trying to improve it.' His friends made up a gay crowd, and were dashing and delightful. He was the centre of them all; and brightness or need was all he asked of them.

Now all this is so reminiscent of my father. One can remember the broken-down actor, the Crimean veteran, the ex-convict, a most motley collection of beggars, the men and women with drunken habits—they all gathered in our home, and their chief claim to be present was their need. All these meetings were made radiant by the warm love of my father and mother. We often said that he loved the very good and the very bad. There was only a slight trace of contempt in his nature, and that was for the man who did not let himself go, for the vacillator, and the one who had not a touch of passion in his life. Of course my father did not say that among his guests there were publicans and sinners—that thought never struck him. He knew that they wanted help, and he had no time to argue—their

need was too urgent. He was not a 'scientific philanthropist,' but he was a good Samaritan—and many men and women know that to their great and endless comfort. In all this one sees his father breaking out: but there is one great difference, for the son's love was an offering (to him but a poor one) to Christ, and the other was rather the response of human nature to present need. Still they both gave their love to 'His little ones,' and so both did it unto Him.

My father's boyhood was joyous: the home was at first at Edinburgh, then at Glasgow, and then, later on, at Edinburgh once more. His only touch of pride was in that he was a native of the land of heather.

> Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood.

He could have said, with Robert Louis Stevenson, 'the happiest lot on earth is to be born a Scotsman. If I forget thee, Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning.' To meet a Scotsman amongst the Philistines of that alien land, England, was to him a romance and a delight. Then the conversation would fare, 'Whaur dae ye come frae?' Before the man could ask him the same question, with beaming, unabashed pride, he would say, 'I'm an Edinburgh man.' How often one has heard him say this, and there has always been the same swiftness of attack, and the same boastful and arrogant answer. When we lived in the North of England, if he saw the

Scotch express speeding along the railway line, he would stand with his hat off, and salute her as she passed. It was an act of homage to his loved country. One of the great joys to him of holidaying at Alnmouth was that he was near the border, and that many trains passed through that village to the land of his love. Opportunities of saluting the Scotch express were multiplied, and he seized every one. He was a fierce and unrestrained lover of his country—he gave it such a pure devotion that he was able to love the world too. He is an illustration of the fact that you cannot love the countries of the world until you have given your love to your 'ain countree.' He loved his little land of heather and hills and streams; and like all children of a tiny land he was a wild and passionate lover of little and oppressed peoples. Still, even if his fair land occupied the foreground of his picture, the canvas was quite large enough to make room for the whole world.

He was a bright and eager schoolboy, as we find in a letter written by his father: 'The boys' school examination came off the other day, and Jack carried off three first prizes. I am happy to say that the schoolmaster says that Jack is the best behaved and cleverest boy in the school: and this he has told to the parents of his other scholars.' The last clause certainly adds worth to the former part of the sentence. His schooldays at 'The Academy' were eventful, not only in

his bookwork, but in friendships and fights, in the thousand and one things which go to make up the sum total of schooldays. In later life he would sometimes speak about the snow-fights which the Academy waged with the High School, of the riotous ways of himself and his brothers, of one escapade of street-bell ringing, and of the irate appearance of an inmate of one of the houses, who, all too late to catch the boys, cried with exasperated temper, 'I know who you are—you are one of those infernal Brashes.'

Then the schooldays wore to an end, and he entered a well-known Edinburgh Insurance Company, of which his uncle was secretary. His father was living at this time at Glasgow, but on entering the Company he made his home with his uncle at Edinburgh—a true bookman, but of quieter ways of life than my grandfather. My father had a high regard for his literary gifts, his kindness, and his charm, and never forgot that he playfully dubbed him, when he became a Methodist, with the name 'Habakkuk Howler.' His work was interesting to him. It was his task to call on some of the clients of the Company, and it was no small delight to him to visit Dr. John Brown, who was just then entering into the central places of life. His leisure hours were filled with sport, and in the summer he answered the call of cricket. In this game he was at home, and his cricket-score book (carefully treasured through the years) shows his prowess with the

bat. He played on one occasion at Lord's Cricket Ground, and this tells something of his worth as a batsman. In the winter the theatre saw much of him. His father and their friends were lovers of the drama, and the great acting of the playhouse of that day appealed very strongly to him. For it was then he saw Charles Kean, Helen Faucit, J. L. Toole (as a young man), and hosts of others. It was a happy rather than a useful life that he was living. What was he to make of it all ? He was to take all the brightness, gaiety, and colour of this life of his, and make it holy by consecrating himself and all to the service of Christ.

## CHAPTER II

### IN THE FAR NORTH

ALL my father's folk were Presbyterians save an aunt and uncle who were Methodists. He often spoke of their sweet life and character. He owed to them his first introduction to the Methodists, and was quickly attracted by them. It is not difficult to learn what was the point of attraction. It was not the system : he did not care a snap of the fingers for that. Methodism gave him something which cast its spell upon him—Passion. This flame and warmth was what his eager soul desired. In Edinburgh, at Nicolson Square Church, the pulpit in those days was filled by that prophet, John Burton. The trembling eloquence of the preacher, the strange spell which he cast over the congregation, and his glowing, burning gospel claimed and captured the sensitive and eager heart of my father. Now all was changed for him ; he was in a new world —his Wonderland ; and he yearned for others to know of the 'wonders of His grace.' Many besides John Burton helped him to step into the light of Christ's presence—Mrs. Ray Palmer, an unknown man who prayed like a

seraph, his aunt, and others. Amongst these one must mention Thomas Burke, of Blantyre, who for a time had been the Methodist class-leader of David Livingstone, and had fought in the Peninsular War. He often spoke to my father of the African hero, but more often of Christ. He had a crutch, and this he shouldered, 'and showed how fights were won.' My father sometimes playfully said to him, 'Napoleon was a greater soldier than Wellington,' but when he said this he always took care that he was out of the reach of the old man's crutch. When my father told me about the days of his conversion he never forgot to mention Thomas Burke. But John Burton, who, to use my father's words, 'preached with his fingers as well as with his voice,' was the one who fired the train.

His love was now ablaze : the conventions of a calm and orderly religious life were at once broken. He soon began to preach. He sometimes spoke of his first service, in which he fared well in his preaching for a time, but when he caught sight of the faces of his congregation he was overwhelmed with fear and nervousness and promptly sat down. Fear, however, was not to claim many victories in its fights with him. Soon the Cowgate in Edinburgh saw this young man standing bareheaded in the open air, preaching the message of Christ's love, and for a time he worked in connexion with the Carrubber's Street Mission. Something had snapped within him.

He often said, 'I opened the sluice-gates of my heart, and the trembling waters of Christ's love rushed wildly into my soul.' He was now an apostle and missionary, but to the little-knowing world he was a fanatic. His father could not understand him, and was at first more alive to the perils of this enthusiasm than to its beauty. A letter, written in 1860, during this period, tells us what appeared to the father the dangers of his son's new-found faith.

You need never be afraid of speaking out your mind to your mother and to me on religious subjects. I am glad to see the bent of your mind keeping the direction it does. We gave your letter most pleased and attentive perusal, and have resumed family readings and prayers. As you say, we must not look to to-morrow, as we know not when the Bridegroom cometh; we should have our lamps always burning. At the same time, Jack, as I always speak frankly, I must admit I cannot say that I altogether like the Methodists. I am afraid you are getting into their way, as with all the good and truth in your remarks, there seems to be a sort of self-glorification peculiar to that sect. You seem to be pointing smilingly to yourself, and saying, 'Look at me, follow me, I'm all right.' There is a want of humility in your religion which I don't like, and which to me seems to resemble the Pharisee of old, as he swept by, after going through his different ordinances, and reproving all who did not obey as he did. For example, your remarks upon my neglect of family worship, while quite true

and correct, might have been tempered thus: 'And while, dear father and mother, I point this out to you, I do so with pain and remorse, when I think of the repeated times, Sunday after Sunday, and month after month, I myself did everything in my power to prevent religious exercises. How I "gloomed" when called from my novel, and I had to join in worship, and how in spite of remonstrance persisted in keeping my novel open at my feet ready to begin again the moment the tiresome reading of the Bible was over. How often in my own reading did I hurry through, slurring words, or yawning wearily while others were reading. And when my younger brothers broke out in laughter and inattention I did not, as became your eldest son, reprove their thoughtlessness either by precept or example. And now, while enjoying my Bible and humbly looking up to and trusting in my Redeemer, with what regret do I look back upon that day, when my perverse thoughtlessness turned a family meeting for prayer into a scene of cursing, with the Holy Book itself flying at my head.' This you may have forgotten, but if so it shows a great want of self-examination and searching of the heart to which I am afraid many of your sect are given; and to show that not I alone think of those things, Martha (the maid), after hearing of it, wondered, and talked of the Sundays spent at home by you. Now, my dear Jack, I do not write this in any antagonistic spirit. I wish you to press on toward the mark, but at the same time to take heed lest you fall. You recollect the Parable of the Sower, and now I hope and believe that in you the seed has fallen in good ground. But even with that, recollect that the tares spring up

along with the wheat. Now self-examination and perfect humility are the two great weeders. What are you reading just now?

There is a deftness of touch about this letter, and a certain skilful diagnosis of the dangers of Methodism which is indeed fascinating. Our dangers are often in a lack of self-examination and in a lack of humility. My father certainly lived up to the maxim that an unexamined life is not worth living ; as to humility, well, we sometimes said that he carried it to the point of a delightful absurdity. I think that he avoided falling over the cliff of heedlessness and pride because his father pointed out to him its devastating precipice in his early days of Methodism.

Here and there in my grandfather's letters one finds him warning his son against the excesses of enthusiasm. For instance, he writes :

Trust not in the Palmers or such crew. When in doubt about any point consult your Uncle John. He is sincerely pious at heart, and with his good sound sense will not teach you anything wrong. Recollect, I do not class all Methodists with the Palmers. There are many excellent Christians amongst the body, and I have no doubt you will hear nothing but what is good in Nicolson Square. Don't study hard, don't waste midnight oil and also the oil of the human frame.

My father was at this time a volunteer, and took his part in the military display which was given when Queen Victoria came in the

early sixties to Edinburgh. He enjoyed this, but his heart was in other things. His father was anxious that he should become his assistant, but this was not to be. It was all somewhat inexplicable to his loved ones at home. He might well have said—

I hear a voice you cannot hear
That bids me not to stay;
I see a hand you cannot see,
That beckons me away.

There was a call, a summons, a command. He obeyed, and became a minister of the Methodist Church. In 1864 he went up to London for examination, and was accepted. As he had received the heritage of a Scotchman, an excellent education, he was sent straightway into the work. His first appointment was to Shetland. He had offered for work on the west coast of Africa, but the doctors refused to allow him to go. The other day I was looking through the *Minutes of Conference* for 1865, and read with a strange personal thrill the following words :

James Cuthbert, a promising young missionary who embarked for West Africa in November last, and died at Lagos on his way to Abbeokuta, February 22, 1865. His end was full of peace and holy hope, as the words which were often on his lips testified:

My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near
At times, to faith's far-seeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear.

This brave fellow was the one who took my father's place, for he volunteered for Abbeokuta in that year. The pluck of James Cuthbert thrilled me, and it filled my heart with a strange pride to know that my father so early had been willing to hazard his life for the Lord. He was delighted that the Conference appointed him to Shetland. He tells us his reasons :

I had offered to go there. Why offer to go to that out-of-the-way place? For two reasons: (1) I had heard good accounts of the Shetlanders—their kindness, their simplicity, and earnestness. (2) I had a feeling that I was incompetent for English or Scotch circuits, but that by hook or by crook I might get on in the Shetland Isles.

On August 26, 1864, he said good-bye to his family at Edinburgh.

In less than half an hour (he says) I was alongside of the Shetland steamer at Granton pier. In a few minutes the last bell was rung, and away we steamed for the far-off Northern Isles. It appears but as yesterday when I leaned over the gunwale of the steamer intently gazing upon Edinburgh—that city which is the loveliest city under heaven. At last it was beyond my gaze—then my heart gave way altogether.

This is indeed a true picture. He could confront the ordeal of parting at Edinburgh, but to see the city of his dreams and loved ones fade,

and then disappear, was more than his sensitive soul could bear.

His appointment was to North Mavin and Delting. He was welcomed as he alighted from the boat at Lerwick by a minister, W. J. Cooke, who through all the remaining years of his life was his closest and dearest ministerial friend. From Lerwick the two walked to Walls, the home of Mr. Cooke—a distance of about twenty miles. The latter has described this walk to me in a letter lately received :

> It was a delightful walk. He was full of zeal and hope. We talked about our work, and our souls kindled. The weather was very fine. When the shadows of evening were gathering a deep and holy stillness rested on all around us. There was not a human being save our two selves to be seen or heard. We stood, the deeply-shadowed hills stretched away on either hand, and then your dear father said, 'I feel that I must fall down and worship.' It was one of those moments when God was very near to both of us; but it was one of his characteristics that he was ever sensitive to the divine nearness.

After a few days' stay my father went to his charge at North Roe. The house in which he lived was tiny, and was so near the sea that he says he could have fished from the window of his room. He worked with the sound and music of the sea in his ears : it lulled him to sleep at night, and often when the storms lashed the house with

foam he was awakened out of his sleep by the angry clamour of the ocean. It was in these years that he heard the call of the sea, and answered it. It taught him more than the schools could have ever given to his life. The ocean swirled in his blood; and certainly in his character there was something of the sea; he was swept by high tides and waves of emotions; there was about him a certain 'saltness' which kept all pure that was his. Was he not something like the sea-shell, which holds the sound of sea billows in its spiral chambers? Certainly even in the later years of his life, when one spoke to him of Shetland I am sure that he still heard the waves breaking upon those bleak and rugged shores—but he saw more. He saw those folk who taught him something of the high romance and the deep joy of a minister's life, simple fishermen and their wives, who in the midst of dangerous and hard lives followed their Lord with a love which was tender and beautiful.

The chapel was broken and bare. It had earth for its floor, and in wintry weather he often climbed upon its roof and fastened the bedroom mat over a hole in order to keep the snow outside the house of God. But it was indeed a Bethel to him. It had its ladder and its vision of Heaven. Here he preached three Sundays in every month, and the fourth he tramped twenty-four miles, sometimes over the snow, to preach to a few folk in a scattered hamlet. This journey was over

bog and quagmire, and was full of dangers; and when the snow was lying, and especially when it was drifting, as my father knew by many a hard experience, it was a fight for life. Then there was the perilous sail from one isle to another or across a bay. He speaks of his pleading with groups of fishermen to take him over the sound. They refused. He told them he must go, for he had to preach on the other side. They at last consented. In writing about this in later years he makes the naïve comment 'How brave these Shetland fishermen are!' Then, as ever, he did not see his own heroism.

He once told me that one dark night he was being guided out of a farm-house by a Shetland girl. The farmyard was miry, and my father said, 'Jenny, this is like the Slough of Despond.' 'Oh, minister,' she said, 'ye shouldn'na make fun of holy things.' He replied, 'The Slough of Despond is not in the Bible.' 'No,' she said, 'but it is in the next book to the Bible.' My father always treasured her happy remark.

He certainly loved his work, and no toil was too great for him. Mr. Cooke tells me that one Sunday he was preaching at Aith, the nearest place to my father's circuit, and was holding a second service that day. 'Just as I was commencing the service your father came in: he was fagged out by his long walk after his service at one of the chapels. I asked him whether he would preach, and said it would be a pleasure to

the people if he would do so. 'Just let me,' said he, 'sit down a bit and have a sleep, and when you come to the sermon I'll try.' He sat in the pulpit and slept, and when the time for the sermon had come he got up quite refreshed, and in his own loving, pleading style put Christ before the 'people.' He was furiously indignant with the way in which the land factors of that time 'farmed' out their land, and by their extortion robbed the people. He fought for the peasant before the face of the factors and won. That he was venturesome for Christ, and that he was in many perils one can gather from his father's letters, in which he is constantly advising his lad to temper his zeal with moderation. He writes :

Long may you do good is our cordial wish, but at the same time we cannot find any proof in Scripture or elsewhere that martyrdom is necessary for the sake of giving a prayer to a dozen families (perhaps as well living and believing as yourself); recollect you can do far more good, if spared to pursue your ministry.

Or again he says :

Recollect that the inspired apostolic days are past; and as far as I can, I forbid you uselessly sacrificing your health in pursuit of that phantom conversion. Do not expect to be able to convert all North Mavin, but do your work honestly and conscientiously, leaving the results to God.

And in another letter he says :

No true warrior thrusts himself into unnecessary danger, and we are expressly forbidden, where we can do no good, to do ourselves hurt. So take every precaution, dear lad, for your own sake and for your parents' sake, and for God's sake, for whom a good and faithful worker can do far more strong than weak, alive than dead.

It was hard for the father to understand the risks and perils undertaken by his son in order to pray with a few fishermen and fisherwives. But the zeal was glowing and passionate, and one which was never restrained—no, not even by the be-not-righteous-overmuch advice of the father. He often said, 'It would have been a burning shame if I had not loved these lonely people.' The son had a certain disregard for his own health, but a wistful concern for that of others. His father speaks of this in the last letter (dated April 13, 1865) that he ever wrote to his son. 'You are always fancying yourself in good health and your friends in galloping consumption.'

It was while he was in the midst of his labours in Shetland that his father, while surveying a building, had an accident, falling through a trap-door. He was badly injured, and although he seemed to be winning back his strength, had a relapse and died in that year—1865. My father hurried from Shetland so that he might be present at the funeral, but owing to the infrequent boat service, was unable to reach home in time.

He always spoke of his father with a warm love, and was delighted to tell of his debonair manners, of his humour, and sparkle, and true goodness. He once said to one of his children, 'I was brought up in affluence. Of course I mean the affluence of Love.'

My father felt the glow and romance of his Shetland work. He saw many glorious sunrises and sunsets in Shetland, but no sunrise so beautiful as the light that fell upon the forgiven sinner's soul, and no sunset so thrilling and so full of loveliness as the glow of colour which filled the room of the dying saints whom he watched as they passed to their Lord. It was in this way that crofters' cottages became cathedrals, and hovels spoke of heaven, and barns of Bethel. Mr. Cooke tells how he asked my father to go and see a young fisherman who had been injured in a foolish frolic after his return from sea, and was greatly troubled about his sins. My father went. We will let Mr. Cooke describe the visit :

You can imagine your father gently clasping the sick man's hand; his sympathy with him in his pain, which was severe; the hopeful tone of his voice as he told him of Jesus. It was one of the poorest of Shetland huts we were in. We had entered it through the byre where the cows were; its floor was beaten clay, it was dark and dirty, there were calves tied in one corner, and fowls at liberty to go where they pleased; but we knew it that afternoon as the gate of heaven when light broke upon

the troubled heart of the young man who laid hold on Christ for salvation. We left him repeating to himself:

> I hold Thee with a trembling hand,
> But will not let Thee go.

He lingered some months, patiently suffering the will of his heavenly Father, and then passed in his sleep through the gate into the city. It was your father who led this young man into light.

This story is a little window which lets us look into his Shetland days. We see many such scenes, and they explain the ecstasy of his ministry—no perils on sea, no hard tramps over snow-swept moors, no loneliness, no disappointment, could dim for him the beauty of his joyous and romantic work. It would be impossible better to describe his Shetland work than in the words of the following letter. It was written by an old bed-ridden, rheumatic Shetland lady after my father's passing—that is, forty-five years after he left North Mavin. We print it as it is, and we believe that it is well worth treasuring in the archives of the Christian Church.

Mr. Brash, our dear minister and friend, and your dear father, came to Shetland, and he was so full of the love of God and the Holy Spirit. He just expected and it was given. When he started his mission shortly after he came, he said, 'I told you the place was too small;' and so it was; they had to arrange for a larger. He had a great lot of converts. My sister could not find her way to the

light, so he took out his watch, and said, 'I will not give it to you, but if you will put out your hand, you can have it.' Thus he told her what faith was, and thus she found and accepted Christ. I remember he went to the school, and with two sticks made a cross, and then told us how the dear Lord was crucified. *Oh, he was the cream of ministers!* You see how plain he was. Even a child could understand him. There were no roads and no conveyances, so he had to trudge over moor and fen, sometimes twenty-two miles, to get to his services. Whatever the weather was he had to be there—he must do his Father's work. *Oh, he was a dear shepherd! Oh, he was a lover of souls!* He was always gathering in the sheaves for the Master. He stood in his front-door, and whenever any one passed he walked with them more than a mile, talking of heavenly things. His converts followed him to his services; they loved to hear him. When it was a stormy Sunday, and the members could not get to chapel, he put on his overcoat, and he came to preach to the poor who were not able to hear him. *No wonder we all loved him.* If ever a minister followed in the Lord's footsteps, it was Mr. Brash. He went to a village where there were many fishermen, and he was so anxious to save souls, he would call along all the houses as he went, and get a number of people with him. *There was no lamb left to stray from the fold by him.*

What a great work he did in North Roe! He would sit up all night, and write letters to get the house of God built, when every one was fast asleep. It would be a dreadful thing to let the life of this good man be silent. When he started his

mission at North Roe, his first text was, 'When thou prayest enter into thy closet.' Some of the old members said, 'He has done well; he has started with prayer.' He went to the day school, and asked the school-master to let him give the Bible lesson, and he expounded it in a glorious manner. *Oh, he was so bright!* All his work—class-meetings, cottage meetings, all was faithfully done.

One day your father was in our house, and he was sitting and talking to mother. He went across the room, and put his hand on my sister's shoulder, and said to mother, '*Oh, I do wish I could get her ushered into the church of Christ!*' No wonder I say that he was like one hungering for souls. It did not matter what church they belonged to; he passed none. *His ministry among us was nothing short of a foretaste of heaven below.* He was so kind, and had such a loving heart for the people who were coming along with him. When they came to a brook, he would not let them damp their feet, but he pulled off his boots and stockings, and carried them across. No wonder that the half will never be told about his kind deeds in Shetland. Again, perhaps ten years after he left Shetland, he was preaching at Edinburgh, and when he had finished his sermon, he spoke from the pulpit, and told all about his happy ministry in Shetland, and said if there were any one from North Roe they must come and speak with him in the vestry. There was one girl who went in, and they spent such a happy time together. After his last service here, one of the old fishermen truly said, 'We shall never have another Brash.'

## CHAPTER III

### THE MESSENGER WAS—LOVE

IT is not my wish to give a detailed historical account of my father's ministry, but in this chapter we will try to give a bird's-eye picture of it. For forty-four years he was a travelling preacher; and whatever changes came upon him, one can safely say that nothing marred the beauty of his service. After leaving Shetland, he laboured at Peterhead. About forty years after his ministry there, he went back one summer for his holidays. The minister of that day tells me that my father preached for them on a week-night. The school-room was crowded with his old friends, and he said, 'We must have another service to-morrow evening.' Again they came, and sat on the hard forms in the bare room. When the service was closed they were loth to go, so he sat on the table and spoke to them about the old days. After this they all filed out one by one, and each spoke the same tender words which vibrate to the desire of return—'Hist ye back!' He only ministered in this Aberdeen fishing-village one year.

At the Liverpool Conference he told the story

of the great revival on the East Coast of Scotland, in the examination of candidates for ordination. His soul was ablaze, and soon the audience was aflame with the fires of revival. He was but an unknown Scotch lad, but at the close of this meeting, Mr. Romilly Hall—then President—claimed him as his assistant. Thus he came to Manchester. His mother came to live with him, and while attending the church in which he was minister, gave her heart to God. My father asked her to attend his society-class, but her Scotch reserve made her insist upon a promise being given by her son that he would never call upon her to speak. To this he assented, but said that he would tell the story of her conversion. At the first class-meeting he began to tell the story, but he had not travelled far before his mother very excitedly said, 'You are not telling it right, Jack,' and forthwith speedily poured forth the story of her new-found love. He often told this to prove that when the most timid soul is aglow with love, there is something which makes it claim a share in the spiritual conversation of the class-meeting.

It was while travelling in this circuit that he met my mother. For forty-one years she gave him all that love can give to another, and still gives. In my mental picture of my father I always see my mother, and when I see her I always see him. We sometimes laughingly say to my mother that she was mounted on the little platform in the wings of the stage, and that she worked the lime-

light so that it might fall upon him; but to say this is only to hint a half-truth. They were each all in all to the other, and in death they are not divided. It was my mother who made his gipsy life possible, and upon her fell the burden of many of his kind deeds. He invited the strangers and the outcasts to meals, and she made ready for the feast. She always lived on the eve of domestic surprises, for it was ever impossible to tell how many and whom my father would bring in with him. He had read that little noted parable of our Lord, in which He speaks about asking to meals those who can never invite you to their tables; and having grasped its meaning, such was his child-like faith that he dared to apply it. Often we were sent out, unknown to our many and varied visitors, to replenish the insufficient larder. Sometimes my mother would protest, 'You should have told me that you intended to bring six in to supper'; and yet she cherished in her heart nothing but pride in her generous husband, and hoped that he would never reform. How delighted we are that he never did, and that to the end of his days he was unrepentantly hospitable. He was greatly pleased by the remark of a friend, who said, 'Your house is the easiest to get into and the hardest to get out of that I know.' This consciously played a part in his ministry, for hospitality was to him as true to the gospel as preaching.

From Manchester he went to Nottingham, and

spent there three of the happiest years of his life. It was my joy to follow in his footsteps over thirty years after he had left, and all told one tale of him; they spoke of love and of friendship, of intense and helpful preaching. There was a sermon which lived in a most vivid manner in the minds of the hearers. It was one he preached in days of distress and starvation, when there was no work for the stocking-makers. His text was, 'Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee.' One knows what he did; he would identify himself with his hearers, and feel with them in their poverty, and seek to relieve it, and lift their eyes to God. His visiting in these days was wonderful, his pace terrific, and his conventionality less than nothing. I remember a poor man in one of the villages telling me that my father had often shaved in his cottage. And in many such strange but not accidental ways, he identified himself with the people. He was never outside their lives; and yet one can also say of him what Bunyan said of himself—'I was never out of the Bible.' A poor woman told me that she lost her child, and my father came to comfort her, and sorrowed with her with such evident feeling that she became quite distressed for him in his new grief. One says it with all reverence, but as a minister my father bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of his people; his imagination was so keen as to make him stand in the winepress of another's woe. How he showed this in family prayers one can

never forget. He prayed for so many people by name—for the lassie who had just gone to London, for the one who lay in hospital, and for a countless host. It was all done with such tender feeling and deep yearning ; it was all so urgent and real to him. I well remember one saying of his at a meeting, 'There is only one minister who knows the streets of Nottingham better than I do, and that is one who ministered here over thirty years ago.'

It was in these days that he met one who was famed throughout our land—Bendigo, the great prizefighter. He encountered him not in the ring, but in the class-room, for the old bruiser had started to wage 'the good fight.' My father was happy in telling the story how this man, in the telling of his experience, would shout, 'I enjoy perfect love,' and then, moving towards my father, and waving his hands fiercely about in a most pugilistic fashion, would say to him, 'Do you ?' My father, fearing the contiguity of such a fighter, quickly, but timidly, said, '*I* do.'

During these years his visible success was great, and he had the joy of leading many to the shining lands of a perfect peace. Many a time in my ministry at Nottingham my hand has been gripped more tightly because some one longed to tell me what he owed to the saintly service and passionate preaching of my father. The poorest and the richest told the same story. They also spoke of his love for cricket, and of the eager way in which

he stood to watch a match at Trent Bridge Ground; how he would stay just one more over, and then one more. No one ever hinted that cricket kept him from his work, but they said that it kept him from his grave.

But we do not intend to travel with him from circuit to circuit. He was the Lover in all his circuits—and that is the whole story. The circuits that he travelled in, are they not written in the book of 'Hill,' and the acts that he did are they not written in the hearts of his many children? He belongs in reality to no age and to no people and to no territory; his home is amongst those lovers who all speak the same language and come from the same country. Every circuit in which he laboured remembers the service of this *joculator domini* and the radiant love of this troubadour of the Lord. There is an American rendering of a passage in the Psalms, which he often quoted: 'They looked upon Him, and their faces were radiant.' It is the best picture of him I know. Wherever he went he made friends, and he bound them all the more closely to him because he sought to link them to the Lord rather than to himself. We have peeped in upon him as he worked in his early circuits, but there is no need to do more; for the passionate love which was with him then remained with him all the days of his life. It took new forms, and found new spheres of service, but it was the same hot, tingling zeal.

One of the best pictures we can find of him is limned in the sermon record book of his early years. This, together with his thumb-marked and well-worn Bible and hymn-book, best reveal him. This record of his services was a private document, which was seen by no eyes save those of God and himself ; it is, indeed, his *journal intime* ; but we will gaze at it together. One does not desire to draw the veil over any part of his public work, and one does not fear to draw the curtain away from his private sanctuaries. The texts chosen have a directness about them that tells us what his supreme task was—to win men to Christ. We will look at the remarks which he passes on his services. The first : 'Unhappy, not fully prepared.' The next says, 'Very happy.' Then we read, 'Seven persons,' and we know what that means. The next shows that this lover did not find his kingdom of lowly love without combat. 'One found peace ; chapel full ; *felt severely tempted to be proud.*' Then follow these remarks about other services :

'Mr. X——, a backslider, found peace while I was preaching. Praise the Lord !'

'Many anxious. Mrs. —— found peace next morning. Praise the Lord !'

'Mr. —— very anxious ; found peace four days later.'

'Mr. —— was anxious; found peace at home the next morning.'

And then there seems to be a larger number of

visible results, and he writes: 'Fifty stood up; twenty-five, perhaps, found the Lord.' He never overstated his numbers. Love never does.

The next note is abbreviated, but we know what it means. 'Ten anxious; five. Hallelujah!' Then we see these words: 'Forty in the vestry; six, perhaps. Glory to the Trinity!'

He is in the heart of a revival, and the notes tell of high tides of spiritual blessing. We will gaze at a few:

'Week-night service. Schoolroom full. Two brought to Jesus.' The next reads: 'Forty, perhaps, seeking. Praise the Trinity!'

Then an abbreviated note, which is full of meaning: 'Thirty, perhaps, seeking; perhaps ten. Praise be to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!'

Then we read this passage: 'Five said they found Christ; hope so.' He knew there were some who said 'We will go,' and went not.

The next tells of a tired preacher. 'Four or five seeking; too worn out to plead with God for them.' He must have been *very tired* that night.

Then we read: 'Fourteen seeking mercy; five professed. One woman had a great struggle; made happy through God.'

Then there is this record: 'Above twenty seeking; three or four found Jesus. Lucy, Mr. Hall's servant, was one of them.' How characteristic it is that he remembers the name of the servant!

Then we find the story of a marvellous morning

service. 'Moving service! wonderful time! breaking down. Organist professes to find Christ.'

Thirty-seven years afterwards he preached at the same place, and in a letter to one of his children writes: 'A great many people were there who knew me, and who said they were led to Christ through me, and that there are a great many also of them in heaven. The man and his wife with whom I dined said they were my spiritual children. The wife told me that she was led to the Master years ago, *as I was talking with her while walking over the fields to her house.*' This is an illustration which reveals his unceasing ministry.

Then we read: 'Very bad time; did I not deserve it?'

The next entry says: 'Had to give up in consequence of a sore throat.' It must have been a bad one!

Then we read of something which many a preacher has experienced. 'Went to X——'s to dinner. Did no good, nor got any.' The next entry is: 'Very good prayer-meeting. No visible success. *Cause of humiliation.*'

We read: 'Felt very much blessed. Thirteen young people seeking; four or five professed to find Jesus. Forty seeking; eighteen of whom professed. Glorious night. Near the gate of heaven.' Many of these converts won to God during these years stood the test of the years. We are not surprised. For Father Time's scythe cannot cut down the work of love,

For the larger portion of his ministry he won men in large numbers to God. So the tale runs on.

In one of his circuits the fires of revival burned for months, and in chapels and mills he daily preached the message of grace. A friend writes to tell me that he has a book treasure which my father gave him at this time, upon the flyleaf of which there are these words: *Remember the Mill, and special services of* 1881. Then there came a seeming change, but it was only in appearance, not in reality. There was the same deep love for Christ, the same yearning pity for mankind. It could not have had anything other than a great result. A medical man who knew him both in his early ministry and later days says:

> For forty years after I first met your father he was able to work and work hard. In those days it was by the public ministry of the word that he turned men to righteousness; in later days, when we came to know him well, it was by personal influence that he lifted up the individual to a better life. I do not know whether you were ever quite aware of the influence he exerted here in the last circuit in which he spent a full term of years; perhaps none of us ever will. At present we know of several to whom his ministry, particularly in private life, was the determining influence that fitted some of them for the work which they are doing now, and some for the inheritance into which they have already entered. I could give names of *homes* that were distinctly changed in this way.

It would be foolish to give two names to his ministry. It was all one—the ministry of love. It was so varied and yet so unified, so manifold and yet so simple. He had a thousand ways of healing, but they all came from the pharmacopœia of love.

One sometimes thinks that his letter-writing was as much a blessing as his preaching. We will quote a letter written from his sick-room a year before his passing, to one who had lost her aged father :

So, my friend, your dear good father has gone where every good man ought to go when the day's work is done—to his home.

For ever and for ever,
All in the happy home;
There to wait a little while
Till all the rest shall come.

The drowsiness of the last great sleep has come upon him, and he has opened his eyes now, and heard the words which it is the dream of our life to hear, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

I loved your father much; he was so kindly, so reasonable, so bright in spirit and intellect. The fortunes of the campaign hang upon each of us, and he held his post bravely. Such a lovely life is a great legacy, and a great responsibility to all your household. Thank God for fragrant lives, full of that hue and perfume which keep alive the sense of God.

Come and see us when you can. Sick folks are apt to become self-centred. I want patience, which is the child of faith. *I need the hilarity, the gaiety,*

*and the overflowing gladness that the New Testament enforces as our privilege.*

He writes to a preacher who has helped him by a sermon :

I owe the weather a grudge which drove you back home, but whenever you all can come, do—you will be as welcome as the flowers in May. You speak with overmuch kindness about my few words. Your sermons—alas ! I have only heard two—did me great good. That one on showing forth the excellencies of Christ moved me deeply. I greatly appreciate sermons which make me say to myself —Oh, to live like that ! His beauty, His ineffable loveliness move me greatly ! If I had my ministry to live over again I would study hard, visit more thoroughly, but above all pray more. I greatly believe in the intercession of the minister. That's all I can do now, and every day since you came into the circuit I have prayed to the great Father of us all (bless Him !) that He would graciously bless you, your dear wife, and child. May the strong, gentle hand of the Mighty God of Jacob be upon you all for good. Two of my friends love your preaching—that sermon on the Woman of Samaria they greatly enjoyed. While I am writing you my heart has been broken down at the exceeding preciousness of my Master. All the bells in my heart are ringing for very joy. The world does not understand our dance because it does not hear our music.

P.S.—Excuse a fad of mine in letter writing—putting something in that may be helpful. 'Blessed be the wind whithersoever it bloweth, so long as it

bringeth us to the desired haven.'—*St. Francis de Sales.*

Then he is so humorous, and yet so central, as we see in these words: 'The two new ministers are doing well—they have been here a month, and the people are delighted with them. But we all have to learn in Methodism that every sweep of the new broom has a way of bringing one more bristle off the stump.' Again he writes in the same strain of two of his grandchildren:

'Peggy, poor lassie! has had measles. Dick prayed that he might have them too. Poor laddie! He is like old folks, for Paul tells us in the eighth of Romans, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought."' When he wrote this he was in what he called the youth of old age, only a few months away from that day which gave him endless youthful life.

In his letters to his children, he spoke of his longings and aspirations. His method of approach was always most powerful because indirect. Thus he writes:

I have been reading again McCheyne's life. The old Methodists would say, and so do I, that the blessed Spirit brought it home to my heart, and I cannot tell you the great sighing and longing to live like this man that rose within me. I do so want to live like Jesus. When I speak like this you may feel that I am posing, but God knows I never do that. When I mount up with wings like eagles—at my highest flight I never get higher than that

man who smote upon his breast—*you know the story*. How savagely the sins of my life and heart deal with me; but I do think that I can look into His eyes and say, 'I did long to love Thee, O Lord.'

Again he writes:

I find nothing cheers me like having a full and hearty satisfaction in God. You do not know how moody and sad I get. But I find when I have rest, perfect rest in my heart, some one has put his hand upon my nerves, and upon my whole being, and I am quieted, hushed, and made merry *by Him*. I have been getting nearer lately, striving to have one aim in life; one passion, Christ. 'Why talk like this, father, you say; 'I know you so well and have seen you so ragged, such a scarecrow, and so dwarfish in life.' Alas! I know that, but I believe lately I have got somewhat changed—*adjusted more perfectly*. I know I cannot keep in this state, but He can keep me.

No child of his ever used such words of him, for he seemed to us to be perfectly adjusted to the divine will. Once in a letter he says: '*I feel quite at rest, my spirit hushed, and quieted like a child.*' His letters to poor and needy folk, to his many other friends, and to his children, were all a part of his many-sided ministry. Sometimes he would write about football, the latest book, home news, then ask us if we wanted any money—and in a short PS. would say, 'Do not forget your Bible and to pray.' He wrote for the PS., but then we were blind.

He, like love, was at home in differing places,

because he did not scan the surface, but looked into the heart of things. He spent three most happy years in a Mission Church in a slum area, and he gave them the best of his mind and of his heart. In their class-meetings to-day, after a lapse of twenty years, they still talk of his love, his mirth, his deep spirituality; and many of his phrases, so a leader tells me, are still upon their lips. Even now they use these sayings of his—'Go in for God's glory, hull down.' 'Get a fresh angle of vision.' 'Don't judge your captain by the swing of the ship.' 'Let Christ be intertwined, interlaced, and interwoven in your lives.' "Sit down and stare at His promises until He speaks to you.' 'A Christian should be an incarnate conscience in a sinful world.' The last time during my father's life that I preached there, a poor old woman came to me and said, 'How is your father?' I said, 'He is very ill; his heart is very weak.' 'No wonder,' said she; 'he used it a great deal down here.' She spoke what she knew. He was so happy in this church, but he was just as happy in a not far distant Gothic church with surpliced choir and ornate liturgical service. And the reason was because he only asked for one thing in worship—reality; and he only asked to minister to one thing in a congregation—need. He asked not for high or low places; he asked but to serve; for, as he says, '*Referring everything to God makes commonplace lives luminous.*' He knew his 'best people'; they

were washerwomen and mill-owners, pedlars and lawyers, men of many books, and men of 'one book'—they were all those who, to use his phrase, '*threw over everything the mantle of love.*' His 'best people' were all lovers.

To the end he was wont to say that he owed much to his early training in the Presbyterian Church. Sometimes I have wondered whether he ought to have been a Methodist; but a simple woman who, like many of her class, has the habit of saying the wisest thing, said to me, 'What a beautiful thing it is that your father was a Methodist preacher, and travelled in so many circuits; for this was the best way to let many people know this lovely man. It would have been unfair to others to have shut him up in one place.' It was indeed right for him to be a Methodist preacher. He belongs to that type of minister of whom Sir Robertson Nicoll, referring to Murray McCheyne, speaks so truly: 'But men return again and again to the few who have mastered the spiritual secret, whose life has been hid with Christ in God. These are of the same religion, whatever differences there may be in their theology; they are of the old-time religion—hung to the nails of the Cross.' He is hung to the Cross of Love, for he well knows the truth of the mystic words: 'Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well. Love was His meaning. Who showed it thee? Love. What showed it thee? Love. What showed He thee?

Love. Wherefore showed it He? For Love. Hold thou therein, and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end. *Thus was I learned that love was His meaning.*' Those words reveal my father's life.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LOCKED STUDY AND THE OPEN HEART

ONE of the surprises of my childhood was my father's locked study. It is true that when his children knocked he would come to the door, and open to us, but there was first a little shuffling of feet, and then in a few moments he stood before us. Sometimes I thought there must be some one else in the room—for I heard my father's voice ; but on entering I saw him only. It was all mysterious to a child, but as the years passed on I learnt what it meant. For the locked study was the secret of the Open Heart. Because he dwelt every day in the kingdom of penitence and tears and submission, he found his city of mirth and laughter and sunshine.

I have never known any one who believed more in the goodness of others, and less in his own, than my father. I well remember, one day towards the close of his life, some one saying in his bedroom, 'The older I get the less I believe in people.' To this there came the quick reply from under the sheet from the brave soul, though feeble body, 'And the older I get the more I believe in people.' That was a characteristic remark, and will illustrate his habit of believing in the good of others. But it was not his way with

himself : he was a most stern judge upon his own life. For many years I think he feared as to his acceptance at the last. He looked at his life in the self-revealing light of the Cross, and he condemned himself by comparing his life with the highest love. There was a certain sternness in his life towards himself. He had no difficulty as to outcasts, nor profligates, nor the man of the world ; he knew that there was mercy for them. But he could take the most scathing and terrible self-judgements of saint and seer, and apply them to himself. He thought that Augustine was wrong in speaking about the soul being a mass of perdition, and that Lancelot Andrewes was too severe in speaking of himself as 'a stinking carcase' ; but he would roll all these sentences into one and apply them to his own condition. How well I remember one morning talking to him in his bedroom, and seeing in him the lineaments of the saint. He had been reading his Bible, and it lay open before him. He was always beautiful to me, but that morning he was transfigured. He had passed through a night of agony, with attacks of Angina, and he spoke about his pain without a murmur, and as if it were a manifest token of God's love. To me the bedroom was Peniel, Bethel, and the Upper Room, and all that was true and beautiful. There he was, propped up amidst his pillows—a saint, and he knew it not. So I told him, and said, 'If ever there was a saint, you are one, father.' The tears

leapt into his eyes ; he was carried away with waves and tides of high emotion ; he saw Divine Holiness and Love, and then he saw what was to him his battered and broken life, and said, 'Never say that again, W.B.' (He had a way of calling me by my initials, just as if we were boys at school together). 'I am a Hound of Hell!' I was so glad I had said it, and that he denied it, for now I saw that he had the sure sign of the saint—everybody knew that he was one, except himself. There was no pose about his remark ; it was the cry of the contrite heart of the holy man. He meant it in that second of vision and high emotion—but he withdrew it, and this is how it happened. My sister heard the scathing sentence, dashed out of the room, and brought up his breakfast, and said with bright gaiety, 'Well, hell-hound, here's your breakfast.' It was all done with such happy playfulness and with such a dash of mirth that it was too much for him, and he said, 'After all, perhaps I am not a Hound of Hell.' That was the only reservation I ever heard him make as to his wicked heart. He never rose higher (can we ever ?) than the prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' It was sometimes pathetic to hear him speak about some men, for he would say concerning those who were not worthy to unloose his shoe-latchet, 'I should like to be as good as they are.' And yet this sense of imperfection was the mystic rose of changing hues and sweet perfume which made

his whole life so full of aroma. To the last day of his life he had something to live for—to gain a closer intimacy and more perfect nearness to God.

When I was a boy there were certain words and phrases I often heard my father use. He would say, 'The dream and passion of my life is to be holy. I sigh and yearn for God.' He threw his soul into these words until they were trembling with intensity and desire. In fact, the nearest one can get on paper to the way he used the word 'sigh' is to think of the wind sighing through the pine-trees, or of the skirling of the wild birds as they fly over the stormy sea. It was thus that he spoke in my childhood, and with the same words, but with a deeper longing, he called to God in the last days of his life. He had all the yearnings of the mystic, but he never had the sense of 'final' attainment which is often the punishment which comes to the prosaic mind. For life was a battle, and he could not sheathe his sword until the last enemy had been destroyed; it was a road, and he could not cast away his cockle-hat and shoon until he had entered through the gates into the city; it was a voyage, and he could not pull down his sails until he was safe home in port. When one battle, or journey, or voyage was finished, he did not settle down to self-congratulation, but he prepared himself for the next.

And in a certain sense my father's fiercest battle

was his last, for it is not easy always to hear the words of Jesus, 'Let not your heart be troubled,' when you are in the grip of Angina Pectoris. But he did it, and the peace of God garrisoned his heart, and kept even that foe at bay. There was the pain, and the uncertainty as to whether the attack would end his days, and yet he never murmured. His room was the happiest in Handsworth, and one can be certain of this, that more good stories were told in the last six months of his illness in that room than almost any in our land. How can I ever forget his pointing one day at his medicine and saying, 'I am Master of Angina!' Surely this was his day of graduation, and that M.A. was the worthiest and highest that the University of Life could give him.

If ours were the skill of the artist we would place on canvas one picture of him; and yet even when that had been done, one would hesitate to expose it to view in a public gallery, for it is so tender and withal so sacred. One cannot forbear from trying to sketch it. During the last few months of his life my father—to keep his hands warm, and thus relieve the pressure on his heart—wore long, thick, woollen gloves, which covered not only his hands, but also a portion of his arms. Sometimes early in the morning I have stolen stealthily into his room, fearing lest, if he were asleep, I might wake him, and I have seen him sitting up in bed, with his thick gloves clasped together in prayer. I have caught a

glimpse of his moving lips, of his closed eyes, and of his face lit with a joyous light. I have seen, while crossing the Irish Channel, the dawn break with glory, and I have seen strange and beauteous light chasing the shadows on a mountain side; but these things do not even serve as a suggestion of the tender beauty of that rapt face. I suppose that some would call the picture 'An Old Man's Meditations,' but we mark it down in our catalogue as 'A Child at prayer.' It was thus also that he read the Bible. He was at a point in the soul's experiences when criticism did not count. He did not cast on the rubbish-heap a passage because it was rejected by German or English critics, neither did he bind to his heart a text because the scholar accepted it. He did not sail on that sea where compass is not known, and one cannot take one's reckoning by the stars because they are hid. He had a sure and unfailing test, he accepted and loved and adored all those messages which made him sigh for a better life, everything that set the bells in his heart ringing for very joy. He, at any rate, was beyond criticism. It did not trouble him one way or the other: he asked not for more, or less.

He once told me that he was like 'Robinson Crusoe' in one thing—*he could pull up the ladder and withdraw into the house of his life.* It was this that gave order to a life which was spontaneous; serenity to this eager and restless spirit; privacy to one who loved to be amongst

his fellows. He had stretches on the road when he walked with no one but his Lord. He once said, '*No one loves companionship more than I do, and no one is less dependent on it.*' When he read his Bible, he knew that he was travelling through beautiful country—he kept his eyes open for fair visions and his ears for heavenly songs—it was his book of wonder and surprise, of song and of love. He was of opinion that it should be bound in red because it is the book of Red Romance. It never became an 'old' book to him—for it was always more modern to him than the daily paper. I have many pictures in my mind of his reading the Word, but the one which is most vivid is that of the way in which he read the story of the Crucifixion. When he read it in public the under-refrain of it all was, How could they do it? How could men reject and crucify Love? The mystery of the Cross was to him not only in Love dying for others (he knew something of that), but also in men scourging and hissing and hounding Love out of the world. That was indeed a mystery to this lover. When one went to see him towards Good Friday, one would note that his reading was in the story of the Cross as told by the Evangelists. He read it then and always—to use John Bunyan's phrase—'with the water standing in his eyes' and also with wonder and glad surprise. If his prayers were like the drawing up of Robinson Crusoe's ladder, I think his Bible-reading was akin to the

hunting of that well-known adventurer. He yearned to find food for the day's tasks, to fill the storehouse of his life with the plenty of God's Word. He caught his venison and roasted it. His Bible gave him his daily banquet.

The other day I stumbled across a little book in which he wrote the names of those for whom he prayed, and the day of the week on which he interceded for them. It was a revelation—for one would have thought that many of those names had been forgotten by him years before. There is a great unity in the list; they all sorely needed the divine help. He also prayed daily by name for the members of his family, and each worker of our Church on the Foreign Field was remembered by him. With the map before him he interceded for the many nations of the world. An atlas was his book of campaigns; it told him of countries that must be won for Christ. By his bedside he always kept *Great Souls at Prayer*. The book is almost worn to pieces, and is scored and marked. He used it at first with great timidity, for he did not think that he could pray in such company, but after a time he learned that they all prayed as sinners, and so it became one of his greatest helps. To him his only sense of kinship with them was that he too was a sinner who sought the kiss of forgiveness: he never dreamed that he himself was in these hours also 'A Great Soul' at prayer. For the last four years of his life he was under doctor's orders to refrain

from praying other than privately, but he observed this rule as the schoolboy obeys his master's orders—he seized every convenient occasion for breaking it. With a daring and delightful deception he would disentangle himself from this yoke of bondage. Even the British Medical Association could not have forced him to cease ministering at his family altar. One Christmas we waylaid him—at least we tried to do so—and thought that we had saved him from the excitement of praying, on that day of so many tender memories, at family prayers. It was all arranged most skilfully, and the plans were settled in secret conclave, but we had not reckoned with him. We explained that as it was a day of great excitement we thought that it would be better if another read and prayed. He assented—he was always most dangerous when he yielded—and we knew that there were perils ahead, and that the victory might even at this late hour be snatched from us. But the lesson was read, and some one had prayed, and the victory was almost in our hands, when a voice trembling with hope and love broke out with rejoicing. His prayer was something beyond words, and that is why we have forgotten what he said and why we only remember that 'Our hearts burned within us.' It was his victory, and we were all glad that he had won. When visitors came during these years he would always ask some one to pray. He never prayed first, because that would have given us time to say, 'Oh, no,

father, it will excite you.' He was far too clever to give us such an easy triumph, but as soon as the friend had prayed, the 'great soul' would pray. He was 'wild' for prayer; neither doctors nor nurses could have held him in. It was a passionate yearning, which sought and claimed satisfaction.

Thus he fed his soul on the finest of the wheat —on the Word, on prayer, and on the hymns of the Church. No miser could have hugged to himself his gold more eagerly than he daily clung to the treasures and joys of his communion with the Lord. His life was so spontaneous, so hilarious, so conventionless—and yet so splendidly disciplined. The locked study-door, the Bible with the well-worn binding, thumbed and tear-stained, the re-bound and carefully marked hymn-book, all told that tale. No one more eagerly devoured the morning paper, but he had always first talked with the Master and mused over his Bible. He kept his morning tryst with the Lord, and throughout the day did not lose the sense of His presence. It was this which gave him that breeziness which made one think of moors and hills and windswept places. It was this that ever kept him a child of the 'open air.' The breeze of the divine presence so played upon him in his time of rapt communion that in his daily dealing with his fellows there was something which spoke of his conversations and journeyings with God.

## CHAPTER V

### MY FATHER AND CONVENTIONS

No one can even pretend to know my father unless he realizes his attitude to conventions. Many of them he never saw, many he despised. He believed that the world was one great family, and that One was the Master of all. Anything which tended to reduce the dimensions of the world's brotherhood he counted as criminal. The maxim of Augustine, 'Love and do what you like,' was often upon his lips; and as he interpreted life in the light of those words, he was the foe of all that was stiff and stilted, of all that was parochial and narrow. He knew that Christ had broken down the barriers of race and class, and he was not the type of man to try to erect them again. His work rather was to pull down the barricades which the pride of man was for ever placing across the roads of daily life. So although he was an intense lover of his country, he was a greater lover of the world, for he well knew that a love of country ought to teach a man how to leap over the barriers which divide nation from nation That is why a tram or a railway carriage was a parlour to him. He felt quite free to talk to the people in them, and he certainly exercised his

liberty. He thought that much of what is termed reserve was but another name for pride, and that it was hostile to the spirit of love. Sometimes he scandalized the conventional, but more often he claimed friendship by his artlessness and naïvete and childlikeness. When he was away at the sea-side, his warm nature refused to think of the town as other than one great family romping and seeking health and fun together. In a fortnight he would make troops of friends, and as for the children, well, they simply revelled in him. He won their love, not alone by his gift of sundry pennies, but by his childlike ways. If he counted the world as a family, he certainly counted his fellow countrymen as the inner circle of it. The mystic words, 'Whaur dae ye come frae?' took him right into their hearts, and in a short time he seemed to know their family history for many generations. I remember once being over-mastered by my English reserve and saying to him, 'I should not speak to so many people whom you do not know; they will not like it.' But one would have been better employed in appealing to the wind, for he said with incomparable verve and gaiety, 'I am sure they will; it is your cursed English pride. God meant the world to be a family, and it would be so if we were always friendly to all.'

Now this explains something in my father which is striking. There was in him an entire lack of class distinction. He never thought

about people as rich or poor, as learned or ignorant, as old or young, as upper, middle, or lower classes. He certainly had other classes of his own—for people to him were interesting or dull, intense or calculating, sacrificial or greedy. This explains how it was that his friends were amongst poor and rich, educated and uneducated. He cut right across the dividing lines of to-day's classes, and counted his friends in each. I think his great difficulty in life was with the dull and the mean. He conquered his antipathies to the former, but the latter was to the end an enigma to him. For to him life was so prodigal in its bounty and God's love was so reckless and extravagant as to make a mean man an alien on the earth.

Amongst the tramps of the road he found some of his friends. He was once walking to an appointment in the North when he met a tramp, who 'pitched' some story of pitiful woe as they walked along together. The talk is unrecorded, but one could give a shrewd guess that it covered many topics, and that, towards the close, the natural trend of the conversation was towards Jesus. My father gave him a shilling (note the order !) and said to him, 'We are both tramps upon the road of life ; we may never see one another again ; let us give ourselves into the keeping of God—let us pray together.' Thus on the grass by the roadside my father knelt with his new found friend. He would do it all with a

true naturalness. There would be no turning of the head to see if any one was coming—he would be conscious only of the presence of God, and all fear of convention would be forgotten.

Now convention says that when you go shopping you should make the best bargains, and take the best specimens. That is an axiom for almost every one, but it was not for my father. My sister was once buying goods from the greengrocer, and was making a careful choice of the best fruit. My father said to her, 'You should not choose the best; you should leave them for other people.' It was an original remark, and I have never heard of any one else who in honour preferred even those who were to buy afterwards at a greengrocer's shop. On one occasion the milkman brought sour milk to the house, and it had to be thrown away. He would not allow the family to claim any repayment for this. He said, 'No! We ought to bear the loss. It will mean little to the individual loser, but everything to the milkman.' This is strikingly unconventional, but it is Christlike.

He was once sailing for Aberdeen. The passage was stormy, and he had to take care of the rebellious children of his family. But when the hat of a poor woman flew away into the sea, he straightway gave her his cap, and was himself without one for the rest of the voyage. We can never forget how, in the crowded streets of Newcastle-on-Tyne, he carried the fish-basket of a Culler-

coats fisherwoman. He would not think about the conventionality or the reverse of this act, but he would do it because he saw a tired woman who was overburdened by her load. We cannot but think that some of his best sermons were preached when he had quite forgotten that he was a minister, and that he buttoned his collar at the back—perhaps to the tramp or to the Cullercoats fisherwoman. At one time he had a smoking-cap of Turkish pattern with a long tassel given to him. It was of great interest for a short time, for he was a child. He was wearing it one day after dinner when an urgent message came asking that he would visit some one who was very ill. He rushed out of the house, Turkish tassel flapping in the breeze. It was all very unconventional, but he thought only of a poor woman who needed him, and he was not able to see or remember anything else but her dangerous illness.

He had a great love for Italian organ-grinders, and as he knew about six words of their beautiful language, he always began by speaking to them in their own tongue. He would begin with '*buón giorno*' and end with '*grazie.*' It was a strange ending in one sense, because the dusky tune-grinder had received the money : and yet it was the right word with which to close the conversation, for he felt that the man had done him a kindness in speaking to him as a brother. In life it never struck him that he wrought kindnesses,

but he often would say, 'How strangely kind the world is!'

I do not think any one was ever more courteous to servant maids than my father. He always bowed in his most gallant manner to them, and counted many of them amongst his friends. As a little boy I well remember my father speaking to a servant maid in a house in which we were staying together. They were talking about their yearnings for a deeper communion with their Master. I can hear his voice, just as if he were talking to her now, and one cannot better describe it than by quoting the words of John Bunyan, 'And methought they spake as if Joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such an appearance of grace in all they said.' The real gift he gave to a maid when he stayed in a house was not the coin left on the dressing-table (though he always remembered that); it was rather the courtesy and the kind words, and the way in which, without a touch of the 'parson' and of condescension, he commended his Saviour and Friend.

The other day, while walking down the road on a rainy day, I saw two old Irish women sheltering. As I was thinking of my father, I spoke to them, and learned that they were from Connemara, and gave them a little help for the sake of the 'distressful countrie,' and for my father's sake; and as I went away I said that is what he would have done. And then I thought again, and knew

that he would have done it differently ; for as he had left the women he would have bowed to them as if they had been two princesses : he would have even seen a truer greatness in them, the lineaments of the children of God. It was this unconventional extra which made his life so fragrant to the needy : he bowed to every one, but to none with deeper obeisance than to beggars and to tramps. A friend of his well said, 'Mr. Swiveller would have been delighted to travel in the same railway carriage with him.' One would have liked to have listened to the conversation, and have heard 'Richard' ask for a loan, and pocket it with glee and alacrity.

My father did not know that his life was a protest against the conventional ; but he did sigh that it might be an affirmation of the rights of Love. This was the beauty of his unconventional soul ; for his life speaks not of a negative, but of a great positive. It was not that he fought against the conventional, but that he never felt its claim, nor owned its mastery. It was all done without the whirling of the shillelagh, and the treading on the tail of the coat of Society. He did not, as so many do, embitter his life by always grumbling against Mrs. Grundy : to tell the truth, he did not know her, and neither spoke her language nor caught her spirit. He never sought office nor envied those who were in that way of life, and he certainly did not despise them ; he had found his sphere of work, and for him

there was none better. He had a strange blindness for the regulation method, and was always ready to break the rules of the schools, if he thought they were strangling life.

In his preaching he was never mastered by the form or method. His sermons always revealed an underlying unity, but it was one of purpose rather than of the orthodox order. He would cull his flowers of illustration from any garden of life, from books, from sick-rooms, from the people with whom he had come in contact during the week. Though they were often written with the light of the lamp flashing on the page, at an unearthly early morning hour, they never smelt of the oil, but were always throbbing with life, and there was in them an intense concentration of aim and purpose.

I can well remember when, as a schoolboy, I returned home one Eastertide, and, as I arrived in Birmingham at about worship time, I went straight to the Good Friday service. I reached the church where the service was being held, when the congregation was singing a hymn. I slipped in at the back, and caught sight of that face that I loved so well. His gaze answered mine, but that was not enough for him. He walked down from the pulpit, and came to where I was, and kissed me. It was a thing no conventionalist could have done, but it brought no break into the service. It was just like him. His love to God and love to his family and love to the world

were not unrelated to one another, but were so intertwined and interlaced as to be inseparable: they all were to find a place in his worship in the temple.

I often think of the way in which he read out the names of the local preachers at the first meeting of them that I ever attended. It ran on smoothly from Brother Smith to Brother Jones, and then my name was called—it was my home name, and that alone. It was rather embarrassing to me at that time, but it is sheer joy now to know that no formal laws of decorum could force him to call me Brother Brash. It sounded strangely quaint then, but it is sweet to see him now as he sat at that table in a Liverpool vestry, and to hear him so tenderly call my name of boyhood.

During the last four years his crimes and sins against conventionality became greater. He had been down to the gates of death, and had seen things as they are, and he had no place for the artificialities of life. When one went a walk with him in these later days, one wondered how it was that he knew so many folk, but one did not question long, for we learned that on his little tramps round about his home he had been busy in the making of new friendships. In his last six months of illness, some of those who came to inquire about his health were quite unknown to us, but not to him. He was bound to plead guilty to that offence of refusing to regard the world as other than a great family. Besides, he

had found a new point of contact with every one who had a trace of limp in their walking, and with each one who leaned upon a stick. He would bow to some of these and say, 'I've had a stroke ; have you ?'

In friendships he was so expeditious : he did not waste much time on the circumference, but he seemed to have an unerring instinct for the centre. He would take the arm of a man, and walk with him in a most intimate manner, even when he had met him but a few times. The strange part of the story is that by this way of life and this challenging of convention and reserve he did not alienate those whom he met ; but claimed them for life as friends. But one can easily explain the reason. He threw himself with such energy into his quest for a friendly world, there were no half measures, there was no cant; he was so sincere, so eager, so radiant as to be irresistible. He would talk to the stranger on one and all subjects, but not about his Master ; and yet the refrain of the music was the name of Jesus. There was one who wrote to us after my father's passing, and said that he never went to church, but that the way my father spoke to him in the street, and put a hand upon his shoulders, had taught him what a beautiful and sweet thing it is to be a Christian. There was a butcher to whom my father was in the habit of speaking, when he went to his shop with my mother. His conversation with him would probably be about the diffi-

culties of trade, and about his children, and yet he only remembered the experience of the 'burning' heart, and the love of my father, and said, 'Most parsons ought to be in trade, but he was fit to be a minister, studying to the end and doing good.'

The truth about him was that he refused to be chained by any convention : his spirit could not be caged within the bars of propriety. After his illness we did not like him to go out alone ; but he objected to what he playfully termed 'our espionage,' and said that he could not live 'the life of a chained monkey.' He would slip out to take part with some friend in another great game of his life—conversation. He was careful about his health, but he was always venturesome. In fact, he had the true marks of the Romantic Character —a spirit of revolt against convention, and the flaming love of adventure. After one of his long, weary periods of illness, he was at last allowed to go downstairs, but was under orders to take great care of himself. It was during the coal strike, and the day was a bitter one. There was, however, a curiosity burning within him which he felt must be satisfied. He longed to know how large was the family store of coal. Here was an adventure for the invalid with the child's heart. The risks were great, for he had to pass many sentries before he could reach his goal. The dangers were doubled because he had to hobble there rather than walk. He planned this escapade with all the eagerness and *élan* of a schoolboy ;

and when he had satisfied his curiosity he told the story of his daring deed. He was sternly rebuked, but he chortled within, and one could tell by his too innocent look that he was proud of his achievement, and that he would never reform. He was thus always the child of revolt, of surprise, and of adventure.

In politics he belonged to the school that scandalized the 'Orthodox'; for he dared to believe that the souls of the poor and the rich were equal in the sight of God; that the nations of the earth were people of one blood; that the Christians must fight for the oppressed and slay the oppressor. He belonged to a school of English politics, and yet he was above it and greater than it, for he never accepted its shibboleths. He was a lord of freedom in every walk of human life. In his last few hours, when the brain was working without conscious direction, he asked again and again, 'Is Miss Malecka free?'[1] In a true sense he was imprisoned with the prisoners, and found his freedom when they were free. He often said that he increasingly believed in the innate goodness of man. His hope was never blighted by cynicism; in fact, it grew brighter day by day.

In Theology he was a free man; he had found his centre, and his circumference encircled a

[1] This lady was released from prison by the Russian authorities in June, 1912.

great tract of territory. During the last years of his life my father often said to me, 'I grow broader theologically every day. I believe that God somehow—in what way I know not—will bring home all His lost ones. It is a great problem, but it is safe in His strong and tender hands.' A friend of his was a Unitarian, and it was a source of surprise to him to know that my father took such an interest in the divines of his Church and their writings, and so he said to him, 'I am surprised that you, a Methodist, know so much of and have such a love for Unitarian thinkers.' My father quickly replied, 'I never did think anything of labels.' He greatly loved the words of William Penn: 'The Humble, Meek, Merciful, Just, Pious, and Devout Souls are everywhere of one Religion; and when Death has taken off the mask, they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers.' But in some strange way he antedated that promise, and saw here those of the 'One Religion,' and those who wore the 'One Livery.' He never saw labels; that is why Mrs. Grundy could not understand him. He never bowed to a convention, but he fell in astonishment and love at the feet of his Captain whom he called Christ.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SPORTSMAN

To live to the age of seventy-one, and at that period of life to count the selection of a Test Match Team as something of inexpressible importance, is to keep one's enthusiasms, and to be young in old age.

Only five days before my father's passing, a boy of ten was in his bedroom, and they were debating the claims of various cricketers to a place in the All England Eleven. They each agreed upon eight names as certainties, but there was much discussion as to the last three. Nothing was left to chance; the rival claims of the players were carefully reviewed. The two might have been the Selection Committee; the work was done so carefully. The bowling, batting, and fielding qualifications were weighed and valued. They considered who had the strongest nerve to stand the strain of a Test Match, and who would be of most service to his country at this match of such terrific importance.

Now it would be a great mistake to imagine that my father did all this to interest the boy; that would be the opposite of the truth. No, the

boy was a great opportunity for him; here he had at hand some one who would talk upon really important matters; some one who was keenly alive to the great issues which were wrapped up in the choice of this match. And, although he was bound to his bed while choosing the team, he did not feel that he was 'outside' the cricketing world. I well remember that one day he had a fierce heart attack, and we were tremblingly anxious as to whether he would be able to win his way through the pain. Little by little the agony passed away, and then was gone; but it had left him weak and his voice feeble, but strong enough to say, 'Do you think that *we* shall win the Test Match?' He was too frail to move a limb; and yet, in some strange way, he felt that he was a part of the team.

My father watched the political world most closely; but he always turned to the cricketing page first, and I am sure that few men studied the stop-press of the evening paper more carefully than he, for there he found the latest scores. He was not stolid enough to think that there was no need to buy an evening paper because he could see the score in the morning; such great news must be had at once. So one can see him now on his way to a prayer-meeting or a week-evening preaching service, shouting for a newsboy, eagerly and excitedly turning to the cricket matches, glancing down the stop-press, and then with a touch of finality putting the paper in his pocket. His

hasty but careful perusal of the paper might be made in the road at the risk of danger to his life, or underneath a lamp, but he would not wait. If he had not a halfpenny (this was a possible contingency), he would accost the first man he saw. It never struck him that the white-waistcoated gentleman might have no thought of cricket in his mind ; he would straightway ask him, 'How are Yorkshire doing ?' If the man looked puzzled, then my father would glance at him with a look of pity, and his face almost said, 'What a pale, poor world yours is if you know not the national issues which hang upon this match and this sport!' Before the man knew what had happened, he was dispossessed of his paper, and a pair of excited eyes were feasting upon the scores. He would then return the paper, thank the gentleman, and gallop away to his meeting, for he had to make up for those lost three minutes. The stranger would stand and stare, and probably said, 'Well, that is a strange but delightful parson' ; and thus were many friendships made. A certain sense of proportion told him that cricket demanded the supreme loyalty of its devotees. It was not something outside the circle of his religion ; it was in it. He would speak about Christ and cricket in the same breath, and about cricket averages and the missionary problem. Now my father used his cricket in his campaign for Christ. He was in his youth an excellent bat. A friend of his tells me that he remembers him saying in one of

his sermons, 'Do not think that I despise sport; remember that I have played at Lord's.''

On many a village green in his early years he played with the boys of church and Sunday school. It was cricket, but it was something more. It was his way of influencing the lads, of leading them through cricket to Christ. I do not wonder that they learned first to love him and then to love the Master. Many a local preacher and officer of the church learned to love Christ because of the way in which my father stood in the midst of their games. This I know to be true, for it was my joy to follow in his steps in one of my circuits, and to meet church workers who, years before, met my father on village green and in vestry, and who had played cricket with him, and who were brought to Christ by him.

How well one remembers those days of boyhood, when he played cricket with his boys on a patch of ground of strangely diminutive size. It was the lawn of the manse, and the windows were perilously near. But with a splendid indifference to the bills of the glazier, he bowled to his sons, who were eager to smite. My father's enthusiasm seemed, as by a magician's wand, to turn the tiny pitch into the wide-spreading carpet of grass at Lord's. He scarcely did any batting in those days. He knew we liked that. He bowled, fielded, and paid for broken windows. Now all this is a parable of his life. He did the bowling, others did the batting; he found his joy in seeing

others full of joy. That he did find his reward no one could doubt who knew him. He saw more romance in fielding than the average cricketer in batting. His eyes told their own story, for they were more eager and excited than those of a schoolboy.

When we were boys together, my father and his sons, the great event of the year was a visit to Old Trafford. It was something for which we waited. My father was too great a connoisseur in joy to say, 'We will go to Old Trafford to-day.' That was not his way. He would give us plenty of notice, and during the days before the great match—Lancashire and Yorkshire—we would discuss the chances of the contending teams. If Briggs had performed a great feat of bowling, or J. T. Brown had rattled up a century, or a bowler had lost his spin on the ball, or one of the batsmen was a trifle off colour, all these things were taken into consideration, and the effect upon the rival teams was carefully discussed. The interest thus grew more intense day by day, and when the great day arrived, the father and his lads were in a frenzy of excitement. If the day started by being fine, my father was sure it would keep so, and if the morning came in with rain, he was just as certain that the weather would change.

On these days of such great moment we always reached Old Trafford before the gates were open. Sometimes we waited many rainy (though not dreary) hours. My father watched the clouds,

and such was his vision that he always saw streaks of promise which were absent from the sight of the more stolid and less radiant observers. If the day was rainy we always waited until either play began or the umpires decided that there was to be no play that day. In the case of a day of no cricket, my father did not let us go home crestfallen, for he told us that we had seen two of the heroes—the umpires who came out to examine the pitch. He told us who they were, and what prowess in days of yore they had shown on the field. Sometimes we would only see an hour's play, and then rain would drive the players in for the rest of the day. When we were in the train, with his magic wand he would make us believe that our hour had been no ordinary hour, but one extraordinarily full of incident. He would say, 'It was more than worth the journey to see that magnificent catch of Hornby's in the long field,' or he would speak of the brilliant cutting of some batsman. Now this he said not to make us believe we had experienced great things when the opposite was the truth. His mind and heart dwelt not upon the losses, but upon the gains ; not on the hours we had missed, but on the fact that we had sat for one hour on a form in that battle-ground of the giants, and that we had watched for so long the glorious struggle between the rival Roses. But when the weather was fine and the whole day was given to the match, he made it a feast of the gods ; the ginger-beer was the heavenly nectar,

and the sandwiches the ambrosial food, the crowd our fellow banqueters, and the cricketers were the heroes combating in the great fight. He loved the crowd, for they were all his friends. We sat in the cheapest seats, and these to my father were always the best, for he loved to be where the crowd was.

Now the mere watching of a cricket-match when he was with one was no light task. You needed a constant and quick alertness to satisfy him that you were a sportsman. He would ply you with questions: 'Did you notice how prettily and cleanly Denton picked up that ball?' and with lightning swiftness he would refer to some incident in the match, and say, 'Did you see that?' He had brought us out to see all that one could in those six crowded hours of glorious life. The names of great historical players must be remembered, so we were quickly taught them. Not to know Briggs or Peel was to be ill-informed in great national matters, and was a crime which could only be forgiven under a promise of repentance and amendment. The remarks of the crowd were always of infinite variety and worth to him. He was one of them and with them, and he talked to them as if they were his brothers. He counted them as such, for they wore the 'badge of the tribe,' and they knew the password of this great freemasonry of cricket. I can remember one match when Yorkshire scored over three hundred for the loss of two wickets. It was a scorching,

blazing day, and the Lancashire bowlers had been 'collared.' Two typical working men passed by us on the cinder path, and one said sadly to the other, 'It is a dry day, Bill; I promised myself a glass of beer for every wicket that fell; only two so far all day!' How my father enjoyed this! and although he was a strict teetotaller, had a true pity for the man's great sorrow.

He had an open ear for the talk of the crowd. He knew that it was free from artificiality. He listened to it, and delighted in it. He told me that once at Lord's he became friendly with a man, who had brought with him two boys. The youngsters were restless and talkative, and one, on seeing a bill, 'Benefit of Hearne,' said, 'What is a benefit?' The man said, good naturedly, 'Well, it is something like this. Your father sent you with me to-day for your benefit, and not for mine.' The joy of a great match was to him in the game, the crowd, the story, and the good-humoured banter of those about him. How he laughed at the drolleries of Craig, the Surrey cricket poet! I can gaze on the scene once more—the crowd, the sward, Craig cracking his jokes and selling his poems to many, and amongst others to my father, whose face is rippling with sunny laughter as Craig says, referring to the last cut to the boundary, 'Pretty! that is my favourite stroke.' All, all are gone—the old familiar faces.

But it was the cricket that was central—the struggle, the keen excitement; and these things

he would say were not found at their best at a county match, but on a waste piece of ground where a coat did service for wickets, and where boys played as if the issue of the game was of national moment. He often spoke of Nyren's story of Felix, the great cricketer of the Hambledon days, who, when he became an invalid and could not move from his bedroom, used to watch from there the boys on the village green, and said there was no cricket so interesting. My father knew this to be true. He would watch them with blazing interest, and cheer any boy who bowled or batted or fielded well. Sometimes we would ask him to move on, as we, not having so great an enthusiasm, could not sustain our interest so long. But he was hard to move. I remember he once said, 'Do not go now; if you do you will miss the best; there will be a fight soon.' It was thus he watched football. He did not care much for the great matches. The unfair criticism by the home spectators annoyed him. He was too true a sportsman to feel anything but great vexation when the crowd hissed the members of the visiting team; but a college match, or a schoolboy's match, or a hastily-arranged game on a grassless patch of ground gave him something which thrilled him. During the last four years of his life he had more time for watching than ever before, and he seized every opportunity. He seemed to know all the haunts where boys played football; and as we thought it was rather too exciting for him to watch,

we tried to keep him away from parks and football grounds. But with a strange and unerring instinct, even when those places were barred, his walk would bring him to some spot where boys played. He would look surprised (you dear and glorious deceiver!) and we would look cajoled, and once more he would have his heart's desire.

He always counted his friendship with the editor of the *Athletic News* a great honour. To have known a Prime Minister or an Archbishop would have been trivial in comparison with the glory of being on terms of intimacy with a king of literary sportsmen. When his nephew's son (remote relationship to some, but not to him) found a place in the Oxford cricket team, and his cousin's son stroked the Cambridge boat, the cup of joy was full to the brim and overflowing. The truth of it is that in the best sense of the word he never grew up. He enshrined in his heart, along with the awe and rapture of the saint, the enthusiasm of the schoolboy. In company with a friend, I was one day talking to him in his garden, and he stole the evening newspaper out of my hand. There was a hurried turning of pages, then a leap, and a parson's hat flying high in the air, and then a frantic and jubilant cry, "Hurrah for auld Scotland!" rang through the air. The stop-press had told him that a Scot had won the Bisley Cup, and the news was given to us in the above dramatic fashion. He could not have done it in sober Saxon style. Although he was then sixty-

six, no Celtic lad could have raised a greater whirlwind of excitement and enthusiasm.

He played golf with the same keenness; and no one liked to win more than he, and no one could lose with better grace. Those days when we played together on Newcastle Moor and on other courses can never come back; but the memory tells me that I also have lived in Arcady. One day we and two friends were to play a foursome. He was not feeling well, so he arranged to see the doctor first and then to meet us at the club-house. He came, and one could see that he was trying to look happy, but it was clear that something was wrong. We started the game, and I asked what was the report. His only reply was 'He has given me my sentence, but we will not spoil our foursome.' He whispered a word which took the greenness from the grass and the light from the sky. He played very well that game; but a certain mist in my eyes made me foozle my shots even more frequently than at other times. Happily, this 'sentence' was only a preliminary warning. Six years later, while playing with my brother and two other doctors, he had a slight seizure. He took a lovely brassie shot, then sat down on a bunker, and said that he felt tired, and that the others must go on. He had played his last game; he was a paralysed man. But he was still the same. With one side paralysed, and his speech thick, he refused to refrain from 'gurgling' forth a story. I can never forget the strange way

in which the battered body of my father spoke to one of something eternal and divinely strong. Little by little he grew better, but he knew that he could no longer take an active part in sport. Still, he found much joy in thinking of his last brassie shot, and often said 'I am so glad that my last shot at golf was a beauty.' To the end he played chess with eager enthusiasm, followed the cricket and the football, and in the last night of his life, when he was in a half-conscious state, he asked 'Will they play Crawford?' His mind was travelling over the territory of a few years before, when the papers were discussing whether J. N. Crawford (the old Surrey player), who had recently gone to Australia, would be allowed to play for that country against England.

My father was a sportsman to the end. It was in his blood, and he brought it into all his work. I remember he once broke his ribs, and in this state spoke at a meeting at night. It is true he could not stand, and that he was in great pain; still he knew that he must 'play the game' for his side and for his Captain. He showed those who knew him, although he was himself quite unconscious of it, a life of unity in which sport and spirituality were joined together. He was at home in St. John's Gospel, and in the cricket averages; he venerated General Booth and Gilbert Jessop. The instinct of the true sportsman for fair play, for fighting for one's side, was the key to his politics, his activities,

and his whole life. We have called him a sportsman, but the better word is Christian, for central to all was Christ. The Master was with him on the greensward, in the pulpit, in the homes of his people, and in his hours of prayer—he never went anywhere without Him.

## CHAPTER VII

### MY FATHER AND HIS BOOKS

WHEN my father was unconscious during the last few hours of his life, he said again and again, 'Do not sell my books.' The words told of a great love. He was a real bookman. He followed the *Publishers' Circular*, read his catalogues, turned over the barrows outside booksellers' shops, bought bargains, denied himself many a coat and hat to become the owner of certain treasures, and found life's joy in reading them. He was delighted when he heard the story of a local minister who, having worn a hat until it was nearly green, was packed off by his wife to buy a new one, and returned in the evening with the same headgear, but with an armful of secondhand books. 'That man,' he said, 'is a bookman.' He had a rare taste for a good book; he certainly knew the tang of the best literary wine. He was familiar with the highways, but he had a strange delight in roaming along the byways. The great characters were so alive to him, and he spoke about them as if he had often met them in the flesh. I cannot remember the day when Mr. Micawber, Mr. Richard Swiveller, Sarah Gamp, Miss Matty of

*Cranford*, Dominie Sampson, Jeanie Deans, and Rob Roy, were unknown to me. One could almost conjure up the remembrance of their having been introduced to us in person by my father. Oh those narrow Puritan homes! Ours was a Puritan home, and it is a priceless heritage. In it walked Sir Walter Scott, and Charles Dickens, and John Bunyan with his many pilgrims, and Mr. Punch with his hooked nose and his clean jokes, and Marjorie Fleming, and a host of men and women who always brought warmth and radiance with them.

When we were children he would in his spare time read to us some great story. Thus we came to know the romance and thrills of *Ivanhoe* and many another book. It was this which saved us from falling in love with the spurious, for he had introduced us before to the *real* thing. In his morning study he worked according to his plan, and only looked into books of theology and those directly linked to his work. On glancing through his note-books one sees that he read the best and greatest with splendid care, and that he was always studying so as to be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. But in his other reading he was a browser, and for him the field was the world. He had the unerring instinct for a great story, and had the courage to fling down a work, if he found that the style was weak and the matter dull. He read the old and the new, but his heart was with the old writers. Even in his reading his sporting

instincts were active. One well remembers his reading a novel written by a well-known cricketer, for the sake of the description of a match. When talking of Miss Mitford's *Our Village*, his mind used to linger lovingly upon the cricketing scene. It would be hard to say how many times he had read *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, but it would be easy to know which was the favourite part of the book to him. Many a time he read to me the story of that cricket match. Amongst later books, Vachell's *The Hill* gave him unbounded pleasure, and he thought the account of the match 'simply ripping.' He introduced many of us to Nyren's *Book of Cricket*, and loved to talk of the days of the Hambledon Club.

He was a man of peace, and hated war; but he was rapturously happy when reading the great books of the Fight. It is not hard to understand the reason, for anything which was intense and venturesome was sure to appeal to his energetic and courageous soul. How he revelled in Napier's *Peninsular War*! He was in the campaign, and his imagination winged him to Badajoz, Saragossa, and made him march with Sir John Moore in the great retreat, and to stand near with bared head when he died.

Then one remembers his love for books of the open air; for stories which took him over the moors and hills; for naturalists' studies of birds and animals of the field. Many a time he tramped the Yorkshire moors with Halliwell Sutcliffe; and

with George Borrow for a companion he had roamed through England and Wales and Spain. He had seen the scholar gipsy in the dell, and had fallen in love with Isopel Berners, and his heart had leaped up at the words of Petulengro, 'Life is sweet, brother; there's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind upon the heath. Life is very sweet, brother. Who would wish to die?' It was delightful to him that during the time that John Wesley was whirling through England, Gilbert White of Selborne was watching the growth of the flowers and studying the ways and habits of birds. He knew that both Wesley and the quiet clergyman were living at the centre; he loved both of them, for they spoke to him of high roads and gardens and of life. He was familiar with Waterton, Wallace, and Buckland, and was more than delighted when he first met the books of that charming naturalist and writer, W. H. Hudson. *The Purple Land,* which is full of war and murder and rapine, but which has always the wind blowing through it, was an untold joy to him; and with that other book of Hudson's, *A Shepherd of the Downs,* he fell head over heels in love. He often picked up the books of Jefferies, and could thus leave his schedules and his meetings at a second's notice, and tramp with him across the downs. The moors and gardens, and also the distant lands and the sea, called to him. One of his favourite books was Ford's *Gatherings in Spain,*

and he revelled in Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*. He was a pilgrim in literature as well as in religion, and was more than delighted with John Buchan's charming moorland book, *Grey Weather*, and hailed with joy that book of the open road, *The Broad Highway*. The book he loathed was that of the modern school of the superficially smart, of the over-polished epigram, of the gibe, and of hollow and mocking laughter; the books which left a nasty taste in your mouth, and spoke suspicions and distrust of man. He walked with Christian along life's narrow road, and stayed longer than most pilgrims in the House Beautiful. He went fishing with Izaak Walton, for he loved the stream and the talk of that delightful man. He sat in beershops with Mr. Richard Swiveller, and suffered temporary embarrassment with Mr. Micawber, and waited with him for 'something to turn up.' He sat by the chair when the dream children came to Elia, and he saw them vanish away. For Charles Lamb he had a deep love. He saw the beauty of this strangely whimsical genius, of this hero with a failing; there was no one in the world of literary men who drew quite so close to his heart as Elia. There is a fitness in this—that the most lovable man I have met in literature should be so greatly loved by the most lovable man I have met in life. He revelled in the essays and the letters, but, above all, the bravery and kindness of that life of tragic gloom and hilarious mirth captured him.

It was music to listen to him chanting his beloved

Burns. One can hear him now as he reads 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' He was greatly drawn by that lodestone of Scotland and Samoa—Robert Louis Stevenson. Of course, *Treasure Island* was all real to him; for him the only reality was romance, and romance the only reality. He saw John Silver hopping along, and could hear the sound which came from his wooden leg as it smote the ground; he himself hid in the barrel, and he watched the fight on the Treasure Island. But I think that *Kidnapped* was the book which thrilled him most, for it has about it so much of the scent of the heather and the cry of the curlew. The siege in the Round House was a favourite chapter of his, and, man of peace though he was, he delighted in Alan Breck's words to David: 'I love you like a brother'; and, 'O, man!' he cried in a kind of ecstasy, 'Am I no' a bonny fighter?' He understood Alan Breck, who came back to all the perils of Scotland because his heart yearned to see the heather and the deer; he felt that way himself. I shall never forget reading to him the poem of Robert Louis Stevenson:

Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,
My heart remembers how!

His eyes told me that he was standing while I read upon those beloved wine-red moors. He had partaken of many of Barrie's joys, and had more than

heard of Peter Pan. In fact, that 'betwixt and between' child often crowed with joy in his bedroom. He was a lover of all pure literature ; but he refused to share his company with the character of unclean mind and with the heart which was like unto a poisoned well.

He knew his Scott well, and one often saw his eyes gleam as he read his *Ivanhoe, Old Mortality, Red Gauntlet, The Antiquary,* and *The Heart of Midlothian,* for these were his favourites. When illness came to him, and he was ordered to bed, he always made one of these stories the companion of his hours of confinement. I noticed this when but a little boy, and in his last days his bed still showed the red bindings of the Waverley Edition. Well do I remember quietly walking into his room when he was dangerously ill, and fearing lest I might wake him. He was breathing heavily, but the book on the bed told me he had been reading once again the story of *Ivanhoe.* I told him one day of Faber, who, thinking he had but an hour to live, had called for his 'Devotions,' but on being told by the doctor that twenty-four hours were left to him, said, 'Bring me Pickwick.' He did not think he could have said that, but I am sure that if he had made any such remark, he would have substituted another book, and it would have been one of Sir Walter's.

His relation to poetry was somewhat of a surprise to me, for he did not read much in that world, and yet always seemed to have explored

the great treasures. He knew well his Shakespeare and his Blake, and that is perhaps enough. I think that he was too much of a poet to need much reading of poetry ; he certainly saw the rhythmic movement of life, and for him poetry did not only well up in books, but was a secret spring which he often found amidst the tears and laughter of daily life. I well remember reading to him Blake's 'Songs of Innocence.' They truly mirrored his childlike nature, and they were his playmates of the years. With pipe in my mouth, I was chanting to him 'Piping down the Valleys Wild,' and on this occasion the smoking did not add to the distinctness of my reading. When I came to the line, 'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,' a voice from the bed said, 'I wish you would.' As this was a hit, a very palpable hit, I acceded to his request, and went on with the other poems. He knew next to nothing of the laws of metre, but I have never met any one who was so greatly stirred by Blake's poems as he was. He saw all the pictures of aged and young who were together upon 'The Echoing Green,' and his eyes fell lovingly upon the little children who went up the stairs to bed ; and I know that the poem, 'Little lamb, who made thee?' was to him as a sacrament ; his eyes always glistened when this music beat upon his ears. All was so real to him. I am sure he thought he was the child, and he certainly could to the end of his days as a little one lisp the words—

He is callèd by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb,
He is meek and He is mild,
He became a little child,
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!

He had grasped the great secret of Blake's verse, for he knew his poetry was greatest when he was prattling.

If anything beautiful or striking met my father's eye while he was reading, he always demanded that we should have a share of it. This habit has certain drawbacks, for one cannot always joyfully allow oneself to be forcefully seized, while reading a book, in order that one may pay attention to another author. But he gave no quarter, and had an unfailing way of exposing the one who was only pretending to listen, for he knew full well that in this way he would open our eyes and hearts to the beauties of literature. It is a great way of education, but it demands a home in which the father and the family often gather together. We fulfilled that condition, for to us the sweetest, gayest place of life was our home; to us as children, and now, it tells of much travelling in the realms of gold and of one who was our guide to many goodly states and kingdoms. At one time in his busy and crowded life he read to us almost every day after tea. He chose something which told of tournaments and fightings, but it

was always true literature, and had its own right of road to the heart of his children. We were liberally dosed by him with Caldecott's pictures, and volumes of *Punch* (with the Leech drawings and the adventures of Mr. Briggs), but with no catechism. This latter was not a part of his curriculum, but he did not forget it; he administered it in small homeopathic doses, and we took it without wry faces, for it was so delightfully served up, and was not labelled medicine, but was called *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Lovely words and thoughts were to him the wine of life. They brought to him exhilaration and intoxication. He once said to a friend that *Marius the Epicurean* almost made him want to be a heathen. He was indeed a great lover of the writings of Walter Pater. We often talked to one another of *The White Nights*, and about the words of the Mother of Marius, which he loved so much: 'A white bird,' she told him once, looking at him gravely, 'a bird which he must carry in his bosom across crowded public places—his own soul was like that; would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, unruffled and unsoiled?' He certainly had the determination of Marius 'to add nothing, not so much as a passing sigh even, to the great total of man's unhappiness, in his way through the world.' But he did not learn that from Marius, but from the Gospels and from the life of his Lord and Master; besides, he preferred to phrase it in positive language, and so

he often prayed 'Help us, O God, to leave the world better than we found it.'

There is a word in 'Marius'—*truant* reading—which describes the paths my father took in literature; they led him away often from the schools and the schoolhouse to the 'populous silence' of moors and streams and woods, to those places in the world of books which teach you everything, because they are didactic about nothing, to those restful arbours where the blackboard, the schoolmaster's gown and cane, are forgotten, and where, with the heart which watches and receives, we let Nature be our teacher. He asked for books that were suggestive, that taught by hints rather than by maps and diagrams; for the tale, the adventure, the essay, the biography that disturbed one's smugness, that showed the romance of the unromantic, that cleansed the soul and invigorated it as a bathe in the billows of the sea refreshes the body. I do not think that in his 'truant reading' he asked 'What have I learned?' I do not think he asked questions at all; it was enough to be hurled forward by a new impulse, to be excited by a new thrill, to have spent an hour in reading something which brought more colour and joy into the daily life.

He was at home amongst the Puritans, and knew well their writings. Here he did not ask for orthodoxy, but for something which made the bell of truth ring within his heart. He loved Goodwin, John Owen, and Matthew Henry,

because they spoke to his condition. This was his only test in books of experimental theology; and George Fox and Stephen Grellet and John Woolman claimed him because they came with credentials which were signed by truth. He had a flaming love for 'The Friends,' and was familiar with the great story of their fidelity in persecution and their witness to Christ. He did not think of them as a small people, for he knew the greatness of the little. He had an eye for this both in the religious and the national world. We learned this when he read aloud to us Motley's *History of the Dutch Republic*. 'The Covenanters' were his friends, and the fierce faith of Alexander Peden and the deathless courage of John Brown always made his heart glow. His vivid imagination helped him to live in their days. He was with them when they were hunted by the fierce dragoons of Claverhouse; when they worshipped on lonely hills and moors; with them on the Bass Rock; and he wept as he saw them die bravely in the Grass Market, and as he heard them fearlessly confess their Lord. Lover as he was of Sir Walter Scott, he did not accept the portraiture of his pen, but he saw them as they truly were—a band of the bravest men the world has ever known.

He owed much to Dr. Martineau, and there was one saying, amongst many others of his, which was often upon his lips—'A man never travels so far as when he knows not whither he is going.' He found in this school many whose influence abode with him

through the years. One cannot linger to tell of his great love for *Horae Subsecivae*, and especially Dr. John Brown's description of his father, save to say that each time he read it he saw even greater treasures than he had found before; or tell of his great affection for Amiel, or of more than an infinitesimal portion of his reading. He read everywhere; in trains and trams: while he was walking along the street; and there is a story which tells of his being seen reading as he crossed the crowded thoroughfare of Piccadilly, Manchester. It was a book in his pocket which caused a fall from a bicycle to break his ribs.

In his home he was a ravenously hungry reader, and yet ever ready to cast his book to the winds if a friend dropped in, or to help in our lessons, or to be of service in anything. One of his greatest triumphs was to be found in this—that although he was so eager to read, he would at a moment's notice fling himself with interest into the act of entertaining even a dull and drab man. He knew full well that there is in the most prosaic men something greater than literature, something which it is often hard to find, but which is always worth the search. I think that men who were bores ceased to be such to him, for he had the key of love which unlocked their hearts, and he walked into those chambers which were closed to the public view, and found they were hung with pictures of worth and beauty.

One must say something about his tender yearn-

ing for the mystics. He realized that they all came from one country, and spake one language. In desire, in vision, he had explored much of that land, and he certainly knew the speech of its people. The abandon of the seeker, the denial of the supremacy of the intellect, the wild frenzy of a passionate love—all these things made him happy and radiant in their company.

He never read any fiction on Sunday. He always said that he laid down no rules for anyone else, but that he must 'gang his own gait.' So he read the stories of the saints and their triumphs, and his *Pilgrim's Progress*, and found mirth and merriment as he mused. There was for him no touch of sadness in the Sunday. He always tried to make it the happiest day of the seven. One can never forget the way in which he prayed on this day: 'O God, make this a high and lofty day to many a weary soul,' and of this day he often said, 'This is my holiday and my high market day.' And such it was to all at home. It is the way of the Modern to thank God that the Sabbaths of the early days have gone into the misty valleys of the past; but we would give much to call ours back.

All through his ministerial life he had a great love for the lives of the early Methodist preachers, and with the years it grew deeper and stronger. He often walked with them on the Sabbath, or rode with them to their far-off appointments, and their talk together was always of the Lord of the Way. He often said that the writings of these simple

men were great examples of literary style, and had a great wish that others should know that in the directness and clarity of these stories there was something which spoke of true and great literature. He had no desire to copy the details of their lives, but he did yearn that the burning passion of these men might fall upon the Church. He sometimes during the last few weeks read short passages (they were shorter than he meant them to be, for the tears would choke his voice), and he would say, 'What great lovers they are!' These were always the ones who claimed him. He found the saints in all the Churches, for they all wore the livery of the Lord, and he worshipped with them. So he spent his Sundays with Francis de Sales, Forbes Robinson, Hester Ann Rogers, Samuel Rutherfurd, Murray McCheyne, Dr. Andrew Bonar, Fraser (of Brea), Francis of Assisi, and Catherine of Siena, the Early Methodist preachers, James Smetham, and many others. All he asked of them was that they should speak of their love to the Lord. He loved their fiery intensity, and was dramatic enough not to be afraid to say, with Samuel Rutherfurd, 'I am head over heels in love with Jesus Christ.'

Some one has well said of him, 'He was the most voracious reader I ever knew.' He read until he went to bed, and a little in bed before falling asleep ; and when the summer dawn came, it often brought an invitation to this light sleeper to take up the book that lay at his bedside. How

often one has in boyhood, and after, strolled in the early morning into his bedroom and seen this dear bookman lying in bed, and at the same time travelling in the realms of gold! He had a most delicate palate in literature, and an unerring taste for that which was a good repast in the world of books. He had that rare gift of tearing out the heart of a book. What he read he treasured in his memory, and in the world of books he was like unto the good householder, for he brought out of his treasures things new and old. His face always seemed to mirror forth to us the book he was reading; it rippled with laughter, it grew strained and feverish in tales of adventure; when he was reading such a story as *Rab and His Friends*, his tears told us that waves of surging sorrows were swirling through his soul; and while he read of the saints' aspirations and visions the heavenly light upon his face told us that he also saw and knew.

He was born amongst books, and died amongst them; and as we look at his library now it tells of his great love and his many self-denials. For his large library was bought by a man who had but little money to spare. Almost every book tells of savings and adventures and escapades, for he had to smuggle many of them into the house, for the decree had gone forth that he had enough—('as if,' he would say, 'I ever could have!') They tell of happy hours, of friendships, of great enthusiasms. We often laughed at him for his

glowing tributes, and the way in which he so often said of his last piece of reading, 'It is the greatest book I have ever read.' We reminded him that he had already made the same remark three times in the last two weeks. He would smile, and, pointing at himself, would say, 'We musicians know.' It was all said with delightful merriment, but did he not speak the truth? For he was the fiery lover, and not the cold critic of books, and to such an one the last great book has a way of becoming the greatest. When a book set his soul on fire he did not damp the flame by thinking of more glorious bonfires. It is child-like; but when we say that, do we not speak of the highest literary appreciation? For here, as elsewhere, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has He perfected praise.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### HIS MARKED AND TEAR-STAINED HYMN-BOOK

As I write there is before me our greatest family treasure. It is a copy of the Methodist hymn-book which cost little more than a shilling, but its worth to us is priceless. It is re-bound, and even after that precaution has almost fallen to pieces; it is tear-stained and pencil-marked—this is the book which tells the story of his aspirations. It would be possible to tell the type of man who owned this book from the way in which he has used it. One knows at a glance that he has a great love for the dramatic sentence, a strange sensibility of sin, and fiery yearnings too full for words. It is impossible to understand the meanings of his hymn-book unless we remind ourselves of his own words: 'I was brought to God by Mrs. Palmer, and ever since then *I have been haunted and hunted by the question of Holiness.*' He was amongst those who seek full salvation, and the marked hymns tell us how he sighed and yearned for the blessings of Perfect Love. It was something which he reached and did not reach. His experience is best illustrated in the words of Julian of Norwich: 'And thus I saw Him and sought Him; and I had Him and I wanted Him.' He well understood the

meanings of the words, 'To get what you want: that is your punishment.' There never came to him the task fully done, for he knew that his Master was not able to say 'It is finished' until He gave up the ghost. One conquest was but a new call to battle: one adventure but served as a beckoning to another. In this he was like Robinson Crusoe, who, even when he arrived in England after his adventures, heard the call to return to the island of many fights, and who closes his story by saying, 'I am preparing for a longer journey than all these, having lived seventy-two years a life of infinite variety.' It was this sense of a perfect love which was inexhaustible, and which was always opening out fair and beautiful stretches of unknown country, that gave to my father that wistful look which seemed to tell you that he was seeking a better country. His hymn-book tells us that he escaped all the perils which lie so near to this truth of Perfect Love—he never drew near to the precipice of pride, neither was his soul in danger of being dashed upon the jagged rocks of self-satisfaction. He knew that we must ever ask, as Oliver Twist, for more. It is no wonder to us that he has marked that beautiful couplet—

> The sole return Thy love requires
> Is that we ask for more.

and his pencil tells us that he went on to say—

> For more we ask; we open then
> Our hearts to embrace Thy will.

We are treading on holy ground, and we ask for the bared feet and the hushed silence. We are not peeping and botanizing upon a father's grave: we want to aspire and pray with him—for his hymn-book was his prayer-book. The hymns which awoke most echoes within his heart were those of the mystics, and, above all, John Wesley's translation of Tersteegen's hymn, 'Thou hidden Love of God.' He has not marked it with his pencil, but it is thumb-marked. There was no hymn that he used more, and there was no need to place any note by the side of it. Some one tells me that more than ten years ago he heard my father read this hymn, and that he will never forget how he said—

> My heart is *pained*, nor can it be
> At rest, till it finds rest in Thee.

He threw so much agony into the word 'pained' that ever since, when that listener has read or heard those lines, he has thought of that piercing cry that my father uttered as he spoke that one word. But I think my most vivid memory of that hymn is to be found in the words—

> I see *from far* Thy beauteous light.
> Inly I *sigh* for Thy *repose*.

The distance he gave to the phrase 'from far' is something indescribable in words. He drew himself back, and made you think that somewhere on the far distant horizon he, the sinner, faintly saw the 'beauteous light'; but it was the vivid contrast

between the 'Inly I sigh' and 'Thy repose' that claimed me. There was the suppressed sob, and the deep sigh which was more piercing than the cry of the peewit on a lonely moor. He had quite forgotten his audience: it was the soliloquy of his soul, and one will not try to tell how he passed out of all the tones of baffled yearning and quietly and happily said 'Thy repose.' It was what he sought every day and every night; what he found and still more eagerly desired—that repose which finds its best earthly picture in the child fast asleep and folded in its mother's arms. We will let him tell his own story, for these marked words remind us of his words, 'the passion and dream of my life is to be holy.' He sings—

> Obedient faith that waits on Thee
> Thou never wilt reprove,
> But Thou wilt form Thy Son in me,
> And *perfect me* in love.

Or, again, he says—

> Till bold to say my hallowing Lord
> Hath wrought a *perfect cure!*

Again he muses—

> And in Thy blessèd hands I am,
> And trust Thee for a *perfect cure.*

But there is no need to continue quoting his marked passages, which are found in that section, 'For Believers Seeking Full Redemption.' He had prayed and wept and passionately yearned

over every line in that section. He knew what he wanted—*the perfect cure.* He saw the impossibility of it all, and yet he knew that he must seek for it. This was for him a Gordian knot, but he cut it with the keen-edged blade of these words—

> The most impossible of all
> Is, that I e'er from sin should cease;
> Yet shall it be, I know it shall:
> Jesus, look to Thy faithfulness!
> If nothing is too hard for Thee,
> All things are possible for me.

The passion and restraint, the abandon and balance of that hymn of Charles Wesley—Jesus, the First and Last—claimed him. It speaks of that finding and seeking which were ever in his life. He has marked the whole hymn; so he both says—

> Thou wilt the root remove,
> And perfect me in love,

and—

> Yet, when the work is done,
> The work is but begun.

His holiness was not static, but dynamic; it was not something which said only, 'I have found,' but, chiefly, 'I want.' It was always full of fresh inspirations and surprises, and a most sweet humility which spoke of the all of God and the nothingness of the creature. He had given love's gift, but to him it was but small, so he said—

> Small as it is, 'tis all my store,
> More shouldst Thou have, if I had more.

Ever since my early days I can remember the strange but true sense he gave to the words—

*Be it according to Thy word!*
Redeem me from all sin;
My heart would now receive Thee, Lord,
Come in, my Lord, come in!

For by his quoting of that first line he really said, 'I cannot understand how it can be, but Thou hast said so, Lord, and I believe Thee.' No man has any glimmering of the secret of my father's life who knows not that he was a sailor steering his ship over the high seas of life towards the harbour of perfect peace; that he was always hunting that strangely beautiful vision, Perfect Love. We can truly say, to use Dr. Rendel Harris's phrase, he 'got there before he died.' For many years he dwelt in Beulah Land, where the birds sing, and whence one can catch the vision of the minarets and towers of the Celestial City. We who knew him best say of this man of passionate spiritual desires—

Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

He often spoke of his evil heart, and few men had a deeper sense of sin than he. He was of the school of the great penitents. He spoke their language and shared their sensitiveness of soul. One knows that the 'dying thief' brought great joy to his soul, and strengthened his hope that there might be mercy for him. It

gives us a vision of his heart when we see that he has marked the words—

> There the *penitents* who turn
> To the cross their dying eyes
> All the love of Jesus learn
> At His feet in Paradise.

He stands with the penitents, and his only hope was in these words which he loved so dearly, 'Not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences.'

To his children daily he grew more like the Lord, and yet daily his sense of sin and the depth of the wickedness of his heart became more vivid to him. Thus his marked passages speak to us, and remind us that he sighed forth the words—

> Sins unnumbered I confess
> Of exceeding sinfulness.

Or again he cries—

> Tasting that the Lord is good,
> Pining then for poisoned food.

He does not spare himself, but says—

> Pride, when God is passing by;
> Sloth, when souls in darkness die.

But the climax comes with the dramatic words—

> Woke to holy labours fresh
> With the *plague-spot* in my flesh.
> Angel seemed to human sight,
> Stood a *leper in Thy light!*

Now this was not dramatism, nor was there a touch of posing in it. He felt all this ; he saw that plague-spot as vividly as Lady Macbeth saw her blood-stained hand. He stood before himself as a leper. It was little to him that the world thought him a good man. He sought other praise. Sometimes we would tell him that he was a good man, and he would almost fiercely reply, 'I am a painted devil.' It seems strange that he whose life ever spoke of a flaming love should say—

How cold and feeble is my love!
How negligent my fear!
How low my hope of joys above!
How few affections there!

Yet it is easy to understand ; he did not compare his love with the white ashes of a dying fire, but with the burning sun of blazing love.

There is one hymn of which he often spoke during the last year—'Open, Lord, my inward ear.' We will let his markings speak.

Thou canst make me understand,
Though I am slow of heart.

We do not wonder that this man of lowly heart loved the above words. Every line of this hymn had whispered some message to his soul. He said, 'It speaks to my condition,' and so this dear 'penitent' loved the words—

*Show me, as my soul can bear,*
*The depth of inbred sin;*
All the unbelief declare,
The pride that lurks within.

But the words —

> Thou didst undertake for me,
> For me to death was sold,

always told him of the ineffable love, and spoke so tenderly as to make it difficult for him, with his surging emotions, to quote the last words. Many a time I have seen him lost in rapture while he mused over these words—

> From the world of sin, and noise,
> And hurry I withdraw;
> For the small and inward voice
> I wait with humble awe;
> Silent am I now and still,
> Dare not in Thy presence move;
> To my waiting soul reveal
> The secret of Thy love.

He knew that he could not prepare himself for the presence of the King, and so says—

> At last I own it cannot be
> That I should fit myself for Thee:
> Here then to Thee I all resign;
> Thine is the work and only Thine.

No seekers ever sought more frantically for Treasure Island than my father strove to find his haven of rest. That his craft reached it was due to the fact that he trusted—to change the phrase of Robert Louis Stevenson—to the known Steersman whom we call Father. His awareness of the whirling currents of sin led him to place the rudder in stronger hands than his own.

In the soul of my father there was a wild love for the dramatic. He showed this in his quick move-

ments, in his love of the strong word, in his intense feeling and blazing passion. Now when he pleaded with God he was still the same ; he never asked that the word 'worm' should cease to be used in the soliloquies of the soul with God. He well knew the majesty and truth of the lines, and in them rejoiced—

> He calls a worm His friend,
> He calls Himself my God.

If there had been any word which expressed more convincingly the feebleness of man in the presence of God, he would have gladly used it. He had no sympathy with those who would filch from him the strength of startling and suggestive figures of speech. He was not afraid of the word blood. He knew that you would have a pale and tepid literature, if you strangled its strongest words. He could cry with William Blake—

> The *blood* of Jesus made me free;
> Then what have I to do with Thee?

He welcomed the daring word, the bold figure of speech, the dramatic and passionate pleading of the soul with God. He had seen all these things in the Psalms and in the pleadings of seers and mystics, and felt them smartingly in his own experience, and his hymn-book tells how he loved to find them in its pages. Here we find him pleading in dramatic and interrogatory fashion—

> What shall I say Thy grace to move?
> Lord, I am sin, but Thou art love.
> I give up every plea beside,
> Lord, I am lost, but Thou hast died.

He had a great love for those words of dramatic dialogue and eager pleading in the Old Hymn-book, and greatly deplored their absence in the New Edition—

> Didst Thou ever see a soul
> More in need of help than mine?
> Then refuse to make me whole;
> Then withhold the balm divine:
> But if I do need Thee most,
> Come and seek and save the lost.

These words were often in his prayers—

> Stretch my faith's capacity
> Wider and yet wider still;
> Then with all that is in Thee
> My soul for ever fill!

But we have ill read his hymn-book if we do not note that it was the medicine of a sufferer. He sometimes spoke of his pains, and said in his dramatic way, 'The battalions of pain have made a cordon round about me and are drawing closer and closer to me. I feel that at any time they may leap upon me.' They often came in his sleep, and the evening hymns tell how he strengthened his soul against these attacks.

Thus he prays—

> Give to the sick as Thy belovèd sleep,
> And help the captive, comfort those who weep,
> Care for the widows' and the orphans' woe,
> *Keep far our foe.*

Every man has his own foe. We know the medical name of his.

He was ready for the summons in the night, for he says—

> Or if Thou my soul require
> Ere I see the morning light,
> Grant me, Lord, my heart's desire,
> *Perfect me in love to-night.*
> . . . . .

He speaks too of the morning—

> In me, Lord, Thyself reveal,
> *Fill me with a sweet surprise;*
> Let me Thee when waking feel,
> Let me in Thy image rise.

That this prayer was answered all know who saw him wake with morning heart and morning face. When one came into his room in the morning one had thoughts that he had been down to the sea and had his bathe. But it was not of his body that we thought, but of his soul. In this he always prevented us ; long before we came to see him he had been to the One of whom he often sang—

> O God, of good the unfathomed sea!

One well remembers talking to him about the hymns entitled 'Pilgrimage, Guidance, and Perseverance.' We agreed that they might well be called 'The Songs of the Open Road.' All these hymns appealed to him with a strange tenderness, for above all things he was a pilgrim. The writer can truly say—

> One man loved the *pilgrim* soul in you.

From his bedroom window he could see through a narrow opening a few trees. Every morning

he thanked God for giving him this tiny peep of the beyond, but if he had lived in a windowless room his brave soul would have marched forth on wide-stretching pilgrimage. He taught us that the greatest journeyings are those of the soul, and that neither wind, nor sleet, nor driving rain could keep his heroic soul from answering 'The Call of the Road.'

Sometimes I read to him that greatest of all Songs of the Open Road—

> Leader of faithful souls, and Guide.

When we reached those haunting lines—

> That palace of our glorious King,
> We find it nearer while we sing,

the beauty of the words swept over him, and by his vision-filled eyes he taught one to see the truth of those magic words. His heart was in these hymns, and his pencil-markings tell their own tale. He is here seen as a pilgrim, and indeed wears the badge of the tribe. He sings of the safety of the pilgrim in his wanderings—

> By Thine unerring Spirit led,
> We shall not in the desert stray;
> We shall not full direction need,
> Nor miss our providential way;
> As far from danger as from fear,
> While love, almighty love, is near.

He was, to quote one of his markings, 'a cheerful sojourner,' and he knew full well the uses of adversity, for he says—

The fiercer the blast,
The sooner 'tis past;
The troubles that come
Shall come to our rescue and hasten us home.

He spoke little of his 'hame-ganging,' but it was in his thoughts. Sometimes he used that perfect phrase 'beyond the foam'; at other times he told me of the terms used by the old monks—'emigrating'—and said 'that is what I must do shortly.' He sings—

There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there.

and chants in lyrical lines—

And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come.

He has all the hilarity of the pilgrim; and the hymns which speak of the 'happy day' and the dancing heart are all loved by him. I am writing this on the first birthday after his passing, and have been looking at Charles Wesley's Birthday Hymn; it is well scored, and the lines which speak of joy are all noticed. These tell us something of his spiritual mirth and inward delight. He warbles forth his praise—

What a mercy is this,
What a heaven of bliss,
How unspeakably happy am I!

and sings—

In a rapture of joy
My life I employ
The God of my life to proclaim;

'Tis worth living for, this,
To administer bliss
And salvation in Jesus's name—

and makes melody with these words—

My remnant of days
I spend in His praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem:
Be they many or few,
My days are His due,
And they all are devoted to Him.

Thus one might travel on through this Hymn-book, and gaze on him as he yearns and pleads for the souls of men, as he asks for the gift of prayer; but we have seen enough to know that he found his spiritual home in this Book. It was not a system called Methodism that he loved—he was sublimely indifferent to the glories or the failings of *the machine*; but the Hymn-book's spirit of fiery zeal, of yearning pity for mankind, of burning charity, thrilled every nerve and fibre of this devout and passionate soul. There was only one thing that he really yearned for—and that was love. And so we will leave him poring over his Hymn-book, and with deep wells of feeling in his glistening eyes, musing over his marked words—

I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIS PREACHING

PREACHING was the supreme passion of his life, and to him it was no weekly task, but the divine privilege of his days. He always chose a spacious theme, and in his study thought on the uplands of faith, but never forgot the toilers of the plain. His sermon did not come easily to him ; he travailed for it, and found his greatest truths upon his knees, and amidst the laughter of children and the tears of the stricken and the sorrowing. He often quoted the words of Amiel about going to one's study as to an altar. He had ever before him in a little frame these words : 'To commune deeply with Truth is to acquire Power. To speak of Truth, after long and deep communion with it, is almost unavoidably to exert great power over others.' But his study was not merely the room in his house where the greater part of his books were—although no one was more faithful to that part of his work—but he learned much from that book which is stained with the blood of suffering—the human heart. He was one with Bunyan, in

*Photo. Percy Wynne, Birmingham.*

1895.

that 'he preached what he felt—what he smartingly did feel'—these were words which were often upon his lips.

In looking through the manuscripts of his sermons, one catches many glimpses of holy ground. Each sermon opens with a prayer, in which he invokes the help and guidance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the sobbing yearning of desire is heard on every page. There is the happy phrase, the daring illustration, the penitential cry, the constant signs of wide reading; but the vision one gains from reading them is that of a study and a church; his room was like the cell of the anchoritess Julian of Norwich, for he looked from it, as she did, into the church. He saw his people when he was writing his sermons, and he saw himself. I remember talking to him only a few weeks before his passing about the difficulty of praying in a church where the people were unknown to one. He said that he always looked carefully round the congregation, and there was always a touch of crêpe on some sleeve or dress, that he saw others with young children, and old folk, the mirthful, and those who bore traces of care upon their faces, and thus he was able to pray intimately for them. There is no doubt that when he entered the pulpit he was drenched in his subject, and the motif of it was always one—the divine love has come to dwell with men. Even when he preached the 'terrors of the law,' he showed that the most fearful thing in the world is to fall

outside the warm embrace of love ; and God was to him ever one who was still crying, ' How can I give thee up, O Ephraim ?'

The only time that he had not a full ear or eye for his family was on the Sunday ; then he always walked alone to the church, and until the close of the evening worship the day's centre was in his services. There was in his speaking rush and torrential flow, fire and colour, and all was heightened by his tender love. In the early days of his ministry he was one who did the work of an evangelist, and then he knew the joy of seeing the glory of the lighted soul come to many ; and although ' he always stood as though he pleaded with men,' in his later years it was by laying his hand upon the individual rather than upon the crowd that he led men and women into the King's Garden. He was always striving after a goal, and as a preacher he knew that it was one that he could never reach. He was in this an artist, for he knew the meaning of William Watson's words—

> To keep in sight Perfection and adore
> Her beauty is the Artist's best delight,
> His bitterest torture that he can no more
> Than keep her longed-for loveliness in sight.

He could have said with G. F. Watts, the painter of eternal truths, 'My work has been a failure, because my perceptions have been too big for my hands.' His test of a sermon was ever to be found in its capacity to help. He asked not for a

sermon built according to any fixed rules; what he looked for was not merely homiletic skill or literary grace; a sermon was something to him which was good or bad according to its power to rebuke and inspire, to cast down and exalt. He had one beautiful phrase about some of his sermons. He would say, 'They have been greatly blessed of God.' He scorned the pretty sermon, although he had a great love for one that showed the loveliness of Christ. He knew the power of an epigrammatic sentence, but to him it was not a clever saying, but something which would startle and disturb the slumbering hearer. Some sermons he preached again and again, and this often against his own inclination; but as they were so manifestly helpful to many, he felt that he could not discard them. There was one sermon on the text 'Be careful for nothing,' and another on 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' which were full of the messages and echoes of the sobs and fights of life. These were often preached because they were always 'blessed of God.'

How he revelled in the services on the festival days of the Church! One can hear him crying with passionate warmth on Easter Sunday, 'Christ is risen! We ought to be deli-r-r-rious with joy.' (The rolling 'r' of his Scotch speech gave a jubilant vehemence to the words.) A friend reminds me of a sermon which he heard my father preach on a Christmas Day, and says that the whole service is amongst the sweetest and strongest

memories of his life, and that he will for ever treasure in his heart the words, 'We know not whether the Infinite is greater in the cradle or amongst the stars.' But my richest memories are of his Good Friday services, when his spirit always seemed to be drenched with his theme. It was at this season his habit to saturate his soul with the stories of the Crucifixion, until the wonders of this great love thrilled and captured his whole being. How often I have slipped early into his bedroom on this day to find him lost in the splendid vision of divine love! When he spoke, his glistening eyes, and his voice vibrating with emotion, told one something of the deep waves of feeling which were sweeping over him. In some strange sense he felt he had driven in the nails, and thrust his spear into His side. There was no angry and self-righteous blame flung upon the soldiers or priests. The Cross was his Day of Judgement and his Day of Mercy, his day of confession and his day of cleansing. It was then, to use the figure of Augustine, that he stood before himself and looked at himself, and saw himself in the self-revealing rays of the divine love of the crucified Lord. It was thus he stood before his congregation on this day, as one who had *seen* the inner meaning of the Crucifixion, and who knew that its message was forgiveness, and who, with a love which in its torrential strength was like the rushing of a Highland spate, preached Christ to his people.

And this brings us face to face with the greatest triumph of his life—the blazing reality of his message burned brighter every day. There was not a touch of the 'professional' about him. This was an attitude which was to him a much worse sin than profligacy. While I was at college he wrote to me, 'Guard against becoming merely professional. Have the passion, or else back to business. I don't wish you to be sombre, but oft levity takes away the fine edge of the soul. If there be any one who is shady in his talk in college, shun him as you would a poisonous serpent. The one will do you more harm than the other. Get filled with the positive—truth, purity, righteousness, and love.'

Nothing took 'the fine edge from his soul.' He lived in the strength of great positive truths, and they became, as the years sped on, more real and precious to him. His message was always bigger than himself; that is why he was able to hide himself behind it. Not that he was other than himself while preaching. He was then, as ever, a child of surprises, with a mind full of pictures and images of truth; but he always stood as the herald and the ambassador of the King. He was fond of that story of David Hume, which tells how the philosopher said, on hearing John Brown of Haddington preach, 'That's the man for me; he means what he says; he speaks as if Jesus Christ was at his elbow.' He once preached for a friend on a week-night. The congregation was

small, but this could not damp his enthusiasm. The friend, speaking of this service, says : 'Never did such sighings and longings go up to the rafters of that church !'

There can be no doubt as to what was his main theme. One might have said, after worshipping in his church, the words of Wodrow concerning Samuel Rutherfurd : 'That man told me the loveliness of Christ.' This was ever and alway his theme ; but although he generally spake of the blessings of love, he also spoke of its judgements. There was nothing flaccid or flimsy about his presentation, for love was to him something radiant and flaming, something scalding and cooling, something burning and healing. As I have glanced through his sermons, I have been surprised by their amazing directness, by the way in which he fearlessly lays bare the greediness and laziness of many in the Church, by that faithfulness which dares to say that which must have smitten many hearers. But this is what he tried to do. We venture to look at his prayer which prefaces his sermon on 'The Man without the Wedding Garment,' and we read : 'O that this sermon may be made by the Holy Ghost *very searching !* Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, speak.' His prayer was answered as I read it. It sheds light upon the dark places of the heart ; it tracks you down until you can no longer flee, but must cry, 'O wretched man that I am !' It seems to have almost a touch of mercilessness in it until he

rushes to you with this wedding robe, and says with tender tone, 'Will you have the wedding garment?' Christ is the only one who can give it you; you cannot buy it; no earthly looms ever wove it; not a thread of it is of our making. Oh, it makes me so happy! It fits us as nothing else does. We walk in it in the daytime, and sleep in it at night. It suits us in summer as well as in winter. It is the wedding garment that fills us with music and joy. Will you have it?' No wonder that many went away from his services folded in this garment. We can understand what some one meant when she said of that sermon, 'I felt as if he was leaving a wedding garment in each seat, and that I had only to pick one up and put it on.' It was preaching, and of the highest order, for he made his hearers see their rags and filthiness, and feel the need of the garment to cover their sins, and to make them fit to sit down at the feast of the Lord. Sometimes he would lash away in a white frenzy of eager and desperate love; but he knew of One 'who maketh sore and bindeth up. He woundeth, and His hands make whole'; and also, to use his own words, he would 'flog J. D. B. more than any other.'

There is a sermon of his upon 'Purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.' To read it is like standing before a white seat of judgement. He is speaking to the Church, and says, 'In some cases the weak point

is their social habits; they are given to drink.' This sermon was written in 1872, and this adds to the boldness of it. 'In others there is something queer in their business habits; there's a smartness, a sharp practice, and among business people they bear a very doubtful character. In the Church of Christ, alas! there are thousands who sail as close to the wind as they can, who are in bad odour inside and outside the Church. No fragrance ever cometh from their lives; they are the dead flies in the ointment that causeth it to send forth a stinking savour. To bring it home, I say "Such are some of you; the cap fits you; you know it does."' It is a lover that speaks, and we once again learn the volcanic force of love. Again, he says: 'Lashed into the intensest energy about everything, but literally idle about *the one thing*; busy all the day long about comparative trifles, idle all day long about the greatest work in the world that demands the intensest and most passionate service. Idlers! Ugh! my soul come not near them. You idlers, do something; do anything; I care not what.'

Then he turns to the young, and says: 'If you idle now, when the fervour of your first love is upon you, when will you work? Bestir yourselves. Your most earnest men are those who have rushed out in hot haste after their conversion to lead the world to Christ."

Or again, he pleads: 'Look on the sin of man with open eyes and a loving heart; that always

deepens feeling. Let the world, mad as it is, sacrificing time, health, comfort, for that which satisfieth not, sneer at us because things are not done in moderation. Why, no men are so immoderate as they are.'

If this is not faithful and searching preaching, then we do not know what is. He preached both of the hopes and terrors of love, and although his supreme emphasis was upon the welcomes of love, he never ceased to remind his hearers that it spake sometimes of a closed door ; and by one of life's paradoxes, no one can make you believe this but the Lover. There was a largeness about his preaching that told of communings with the infinite ; there was about his message something which gave one, to use the words of Mark Rutherford, 'the sense of the infinite extinguishing all mean cares,' and he merited that beatitude of which the same writer speaks : 'Blessed are they who heal us of our self-despisings.' His message was one which had first of all passed through his mind and heart ; it was always something that he knew and felt ; and as he was a man of such deep seas of emotion, and with a strong gift of seeing life from everybody's standpoint, his message always had a touch of the infinite in it, something which made one think of those words of dreaming vision—'All turn to Jesus, *and find themselves in Him.*' These words best describe his preaching ; poor and rich, and all sorts and conditions of men, were constrained to cry

out when he spoke of his yearnings and longings, of his loneliness and trials, when he was picturing life's stony and rough road—'he is telling my story ; I find myself in his words.'

As I turn over his sermons, I find myself saying, as I look at certain texts, 'No one that I know has a better right to speak on that subject.' Here is one : 'Jesus washing His disciples' feet.' The theme is humility, and all unconsciously to himself, the sketch which he is drawing is my father as I knew him through the years. We will let him speak :—

Sister —— told us last week, when she found full salvation—which is being filled with the love of God —she at once began to do slum work. This great love of Jesus will make us do the most lowly work, not saying: 'Look at me! How humble I am! What servile work I am doing! How lowly I am! *True humility does not hold a looking-glass before itself and gaze admiringly into it.* Humility is not self-conscious. Humility is not inverted pride. The humble man is like Moses, whose face shone, and he wist it not.

My father was the most lowly man I ever knew ; and yet (or rather because of this) there was a petition ever crossing and re-crossing his prayers—'Lord, save me from that cursed foe, Pride.' He had thrown away the mirror.

He was often thanked for services rendered by his friend and namesake, the Rev. John Brash, of Liverpool. He would say, 'No, I did not preach that sermon ; you are thinking of the

*good* Mr. Brash.' He meant it. He did not realize that there were two good men of that name, and that he was the other. It was his habit in lowliness of mind to esteem the other better than himself. One night, when he was lying awake, he said to his nurse, 'I do not think I shall get in.' 'In where?' said his nurse. 'Into heaven,' he replied. Then, musing, he said, 'Yes, I think I shall, but only into a corner. Still, I shall see His face, and that is heaven.' He did indeed wear the livery of lowliness.

The text of another sermon is, 'Be ye filled with the Spirit.' He knew full well what the words mean, and says: 'Every part of a man from basement to attic, every room, every cupboard, everything within the man is to be inhabited by the Spirit.'

One is struck by the fierce insistence upon what he terms 'the urgency and grandeur of righteousness'—by the way in which he shows that the house must be 'stripped' (to use the favourite thought of his beloved Mystics)—before it can become a fit home for the Spirit. He makes this Spirit-filled life so beautiful. While he banishes the 'vain, graceless, and insipid talk,' he shows, referring to the context, that 'the Apostle does not mean bright, witty speaking, for that may be kindly, gracious, and helpful: without it life would be a dead level with a dull leaden sky overhead.' And then his appeal is so naïve and telling. It is an appeal to our best instincts.

Who does not desire this life, so rich, so full of blessings? Who will not aim at this? Who will not seek the best of the best? Who does not desire the exhilaration, the joy, the burning heart, which comes from being filled with the Spirit? Who does not long that his life may be filled with power and humility? Reckon the supreme joy of your life the perpetual, complete inhabiting of your life by the divine Spirit.

He did not subject his life to the terms of the schools; he did not seem to trouble about the phrases, except one—'perfect love'; but there was one sentence he often used both in prayer and preaching: 'May God help us to make everything *rigidly subordinate to the will of God.*' That is what he sighed and strove to do; we know how well he tried. Before me there lie three sermons on Paul's hymn of love. He has a right to speak here, for love was his *métier*. We will let him speak.

Some people rasp you, they irritate you, and if you are quick-tempered you catch fire at once in their presence. Why? Because of the lack of love. For love is like water that never giveth or taketh fire. The slightest spark will set some men in a blaze; but love will never be combustible; it does not catch fire at other men's sparks.

Some think it is high-spirited not to stand any annoyance, or any injury; and so they are provoked and swept along with the momentum of their passions. That is not strength, that is weakness.

My father was one who knew much of the unruliness of the wild horses which are in the shafts of a man's life ; but he had learnt to curb and rein in these prancing steeds, and he who by nature was a man of high tempers became by grace like unto a weaned child. Again he speaks of love that is not easily provoked, and says :

By some strange process we make bad temper compatible with Christian living, while we do not excuse drunkenness, dishonesty, and impurity of life. Because, as one says, ' It is the sin of the good, and the others are the sins of the bad.'

Love was to him the most beautiful and God-like fact of life. He tells us—

Love throws over all imperfect lives the mantle of love; she does not declare nor discover the sorrowed shame. *Love stands in the presence of a fault with a finger on her lips.* Love will not be a common crier nor a common informer.

The italicized words give one picture of my father as he stood in his home and in the world.

Then he says :

Some hastily believe in the faults of others, but they are not the children of love. I wish these people would take a turn at crying up, at exaggerating the good of people; that they would go from house to house trumpeting up all the pretty stories they could tell about their neighbours. I do not tell people to lie, but if there must be exaggeration, one desires a change. Love, although it will not

tell an untruth, is quick-sighted to see the good in others, and is a little blind to their failings.

He knows that love is misjudged, but he cares not, and says :

Love is misunderstood, misconstrued, is not appreciated; well, that will not trouble us—education is at a discount amongst savages!

Or again, he speaks of the love which is kind, and pictures the Son of Love :

Kindness streamed forth from Him on every side. His very face was full of the music of kindness. And so with us, in the measure that we possess this love we shall be kind. Kindness will be the climate of our minds, the atmosphere in which we live. Love will be our badge, our livery.

Again he says :

Love is so kind; it has such nice ways. There are people in the Church who have every virtue under heaven but Love. Children do not run to them for the pleasure they get; children do not ask them what o'clock it is; beggars never ask them for a copper; even the blind man's dog holds its head down as they pass, and seems to say, 'Master, no eyes are better than having such cold eyes as these.'

Or he speaks of love that is not puffed up, and says :

She does not rise from her nest and cackle every time she lays a golden egg; she is not puffed up. Oh, that one could puncture some men with a lancet!

Or he asks :

"How is it with you? Well, often I wish I were in heaven. Many say that because then they would be saved from hell, or because they are full of the disgusts of life; but they do not wish to be there because heaven is the land of Love. Do you ever sigh for the land of Love?

My father is a fit citizen of that land ; he learned the *lingua franca* before he went there. This love was the strongest, the shrewdest, and sanest thing in the world to him. There is one haunting little sentence of his : ' Love has such cunning ways.' He looked artless, but was artful. He was too cunning for the markets and schools of life ; that is why, despising all the world's tawdry toys, he found its pearl of great price—Love. Love was to him like a great flowing tide which made the healing waters of a man's life cover a wide territory. This is what he means when he says ' Let the currents of your being sweep outward in kindly feeling and kindly deeds.' We will listen to him again :

Paul says, ' I care not what a man has, if he has not love.' It is like the heavens without the sun; like an organ without the middle octave. This is Paul's text. Faith was his great truth, and, if he had written about faith, as he writes about love, we should have said, ' Ah! he is riding his hobby to death '; but no, faith is secondary to love and without it all is nothing.

And again, this catholic soul says :

Have they love, that is the vital question? What care I what they call themselves? if they have love they are Christ's. When I am ill I do not ask to see the diploma of the doctor who is helping me. Or, if I am weak, and flung to the wall, and fall among thieves, and some good Samaritan comes and picks me up, I am not anxious that he should say my shibboleth, as I say it, for he has the badge, the livery of the children of the Lord. *Love, Love, Love; oh, to be filled with this Love!*

A dear ministerial friend of my father's writes: 'He was proficient in love. He was an expert in the ways of love. He could love all sorts and conditions of men, and sway them by that one means. There was no abyss that love could not sound, no feat it could not accomplish. He had supreme faith in it, and I shall never forget one week-night service of his on "The love of Christ constraineth us." It was molten metal flowing from the furnace of his heart ; and when we walked home I said to him, "There is only one other man I've known to talk just like that." "Who is it?" said he, with that look of ardent interest we all knew. "Father Faber," I replied, and I meant it. It was just the bursting of a loving heart which carried for the moment all before it. All manner of knowledge did the preacher evidence (for was there ever a more voracious reader?), but the heart melted it all into fervent exhortation. And the 'good time' he had that night was due largely to the fact that

he was preaching right along the groove of his daily thought and conduct. He dwelt in love ; it was his native air.' All this is true. My father often quoted Father Faber's words:

> Forgive me if I say
> For very love, Thy sweetest name
> A thousand times a day.

For him the beginning was love, and the middle was love ; and as Christina Rossetti says, 'The goal is love on the happy hill.' He was a singer of love, and her songs are ever the sweetest. To the close of his days he was making new songs to love, and living them. For his greatest sermon was that life which exalted all who drew near him, that life which he thought so poor and pale a thing, but which gave to so many the fairest vision of Jesus they ever saw. We do not wonder that one of the greatest maxims of his life was, 'Love and do what you like,' but we must not forget that love meant to him—love Christ. His sermons are not only those written in ink that shall fade, and paper that shall crumble ; they abide in pictures, in memories, in influences, in transformed lives.

Surely the divine memory has some gallery of paintings where He stores many pictures of my father ! One will tell how my father hauled an old man's wheelbarrow up a crowded hill in Torquay. This must be counted amongst his sermons, for many remember it, and to this day are helped by it. It can be said of this pilgrim, as Chaucer says of that other, the Poor Parson of

the Town, 'That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.' I well remember my father saying to me, with a play upon his name, 'When I die, I should like men to say of me, "*John* did no miracle, but all things which John spake of this Man were true."' He certainly spoke a true witness of his Lord, and one knows that He wrought miracles. The 'Roadmender' reminds us of this: 'To have faith is to create; to have hope is to call down blessing; to *have love is to work miracles.*' No man can pray, 'Love! Love! Love! oh for this Love!' without having love. For here we know the truth of that great saying of Pascal's, which was often upon my father's lips, 'Thou couldst not truly seek Him if thou hadst not truly found Him.'

## CHAPTER X

### FATHER

We never called the Father of our house 'the Governor.' That is a word which would have in no wise described his relation to us. He was father and friend; he was the most perfect comrade and associate; and although he was king in his home, he never donned the regal robe nor carried the sceptre. He was, in fact, Father; and as the years passed by, that word became sweeter and stronger to us in meaning, until the most welcome truth of divine revelation was seen in the words, 'Like as a father.' It was those words which gave us more than a peep into the heart of God.

My earliest memories are of him standing in the centre of our life; and as I catch a glimpse of him through the mists of the years he appears as a boy with a man's beard. He bought rabbits and pigeons for us, and on rainy and wintry days fed them. He tore up newspapers, and filled bags with the pieces, and then became one of the hounds chasing the hare. He bought us numerous footballs, and placed his coat and clerical hat to serve as goal-posts, and played with us. He stood right in the centre of our daily life, and no school-

boy friend was half as delightful to us or as much one with us as he. He was so inventive in games; he had a great gift of making the small thing large and important. Sometimes he would bowl to one of his children, and although on the field (a small strip of garden) there were only two cricketers, he would turn it into an England *v.* Australia match. The one batsman would stand for eleven men, and the one trundler would play the part of the regular and change bowlers, and at the same time would field at cover-point and point and the long field. He did it with such eagerness as to make it real to one, and in the presence of such a protean personality it was not difficult to take one's innings as Gregory or Trott. When Bonner, the fierce and hurricane hitter, arrived at the wickets, my father would wave his hands to the invisible fieldsmen to go further back and to line the boundary. He would tempt the batsman to drive one of his deliveries out of the ground; and, although when this was done it meant much searching for the ball, before he leapt over the wall of the manse he would cheer 'Bonner's' fierce drive. If the Australian wickets were falling too rapidly, by some mysterious process the English bowling and fielding deteriorated, and the score of the 'Cornstalks' was greater at the close of the innings than at one time had seemed likely. It was strange that in a tight match his children always won. He would miss a catch at a crucial moment, and most dramati-

cally stamp his feet, and cry 'Butter-fingers!' When the winning hit had been made, he would with the next ball bowl the last man of the Australian side. In those days we thought that the strain and excitement of the match prevented him from bowling and fielding his best when the victory depended upon a single run; but the years which bring the philosophic mind suggest another reason. We liked to be 'Australia,' so that we might play the part of Spofforth. Never did the 'demon bowler' work so hard as those children of the Manse. When the match was over, he would challenge us to a return match, and when that was over, to another. Sometimes they play at England *v.* Australia at Lord's and Old Trafford, and the papers are full of the game; but it does not speak to his children of so much excitement and thrill as those international games which we played when we were children together, and when my father was the happiest child of us all.

When it was possible he took us with him to his appointments. He did this, so he said, that he might not be lonely, and because he was frightened by the darkness of some of the roads. So we trotted by his side. We were, indeed, a stalwart bodyguard in short trousers and frocks. What happy times we had with him on those walks! We talked to him as much as he with us. He always had that gift of listening to our childhood's talk, and as the years went by we

always knew that his ear would hearken with eagerness and perfect sympathy to any tale we brought to him. There is in the 'scrap-book of my memory'—to use the phrase of Robert Louis Stevenson—a picture of our holidays at the seaside. It was his wont to choose for us a seaside town where the sands were hard, and where there were rocks from which we could dive. On the 'hard sands' we pitched our wickets; and here, with sides chosen from his own children and those of sundry other families, we played historic matches, the accounts of which are written on the tables of our minds. It was never his way to find the peace of his holiday other than in the presence and sports of his children. Our bathing was an ecstasy to us all. He taught us to swim and dive, and thinking of those times makes one feel refreshed even in the midst of broiling heat. How he enjoyed his bathing! He was the first in and the last out, and he it was who always said, 'Just one more dive and a swim.' A friend said that he would always remember how my father gave to his family in our recreations many sacramental signs of our oneness with him. He was right.

In one sense he did not bring us up; he grew up with us and we with him, yet in the truest meaning of the word he was our educator. But his way was so artless, and yet so full of art. We never knew a silent father; never a dull meal when he was present. His soul was in those hours when he talked with—never at—his children. He

always allowed us to contradict him, but he never made himself the arbiter, for he would say, 'What does the Encyclopaedia say?' or, 'Look up *Who's Who*,' or 'Rax me the Bible.' He loved to do this, and we thought he asked us to find these answers because he was not sure; but we tell a different tale now. It was his way of making our curiosity more keen, and of enlarging our world. He knew full well the Lord's method, who appointed twelve that they might be *with Him*. Thus my father stood in our midst, and by his presence life's horizons were widened, and the vision of a great and glorious world dawned before our eyes.

It would be in one sense, though a very limited one, true to say that he never spoke to us about Christ. He never pestered us about our souls; he knew a better way than that. He just went on quietly living the life of love, and reflecting as in a mirror the beauty of his Master's face. His life was so radiant, so fragrant, so tender, as to make us know that the dream of our hearts was to be like him. We had only to learn one thing more, and that was this—the secret of his life is Jesus. He had only one law, and that was love; he had a theory that the throbbing touch of love was more potent than the mailed fist. He thought that love was strong enough to do its own work; and thus he reared us.

One can never forget his birthdays. He was so eager-hearted, and gave himself with such child-

like zest to the revelry of that day. I do not think that the passing of the years took from him one of life's pure thrills; certainly not that feverish expectancy with which a child yearns for the dawn of a birthday. The only thing that he did not like on that day was the taking of presents. He really believed that it is better to give than to receive, and would not be cheated out of this joy on this day, so he had a way of giving presents to commemorate his birth. He was always inverting the order of things. I think he learned it from his love of the Beatitudes. In fact, sometimes we playfully accused him of the selfishness of his unselfishness, for he wanted to run errands for his children, and carry our luggage. We had to be firm with him, but we loved him all the more for the strange surprises and inventiveness of his love. He never was other than grieved when we spoke ill of any one, either of the living or the dead. He often said, 'To speak evil of a person is the sign of a limited and blinded heart.' He himself was true to this teaching, and did not contradict it, but rather amplified it when he spoke with burning passion of the iniquities of individuals or systems that crushed the lives of the children of God.

Then there came the days when we went away from home to school. While seeing us off to school after the holidays, he would race the train to the very end of the platform, and then stand with his hat off, and with hand pointing heaven-

wards. It was always the last sight our tear-stained eyes caught of him; it was our sacramental symbol. When we returned, how rapturously he welcomed us! He did not say it in so many words, but he meant us to understand that we were all about to have a jocund time together. He was a most singular being when the school report and bill arrived, for there were certain things of conduct and expense written therein which we should have preferred to have been forgotten. We had a haunting dread that grief might come to him from this quarter; but with his keen eye for good work he always first found out the strong points, and dwelt lovingly on them. He did not even complain of our somewhat unnecessary expenses; and thus he turned the hour into one in which there was no trace of hardness, but one in which there gushed forth a true sympathy with the varying calls and expenses of a schoolboy's life.

What holidays those were when he was our guide and fellow sportsman and father! In our London days he always carefully garnered his time so that he might go with us to see the sights of the city. He gave everything a local habitation and a name, and seemed to breathe life even into the mummies in the British Museum. He took us to the haunts of Charles Lamb, and made us quite familiar with the Temple. One recalls a day in which he showed us Bunhill Fields. He bared his head as he stood at the graves of the nobly great, and one cannot but think that the deep love

of his children for John Bunyan was born that day. He paid homage at that shrine; certainly not the careless gaze of the sight-seer. Then there were those days in which he guided our feet into the National Art Gallery, and showed us its treasures. He told us stories of the painters, and cast over everything a glamour which is not always there for a school-child. He made it all so intensely exciting, and, we thought, so 'sporting.' Often he sent us for the day to the Tower and to the other 'sights' of London, and when we came home at night, plied us with questions. But whenever he could he came with us, and so various places have an added charm to us now, for there my father stood in our midst when we were children.

He found no joy in lonely experience; he always asked for some one with whom he might share it. To listen with him to a sermon or a lecture was an experience and an ordeal; he would glance at you and say, 'Isn't that beautiful?' for he could not eat his bread alone. This had its inconveniences and discomforts at times, but they were trivial in comparison with the joy that he gave and the delight which came to him through one's smile of assent.

His world was in his home with his wife and bairns. He discussed all manner of subjects with his children, and asked their advice upon matters of importance. He never decided to accept an invitation to a new circuit without holding a com-

mittee on which sat every member of the family.

A friend aptly says of him that he lived in the house of his life with the blinds up. That is why he saw so much, and why the passing procession of life was never unnoticed by him. It would be only half a truth to say that people saw him ; the main thing is that he saw them in all their varying and changing hues. What was said of William Blake—that he pressed his forehead against the window—might well be said of my father. He was curious to know in order that he might not miss anything that was beautiful, and that he might seize every chance of helping others. We sometimes talk about 'two worlds being ours'; he seemed to have thousands. He could see a 'world in a grain of sand,' and another in a washerwoman, and another in an errand-boy. He never went out without meeting some wonderful person, and he found them among life's ordinary folk. He saw the best side of each, and he believed that when you had once reached that standpoint you could see everywhere the extraordinary.

Every day brought him fresh and glad surprises, and in his home he would tell us all about these ecstatic meetings and interviews. He was like a child in this, for when he heard anything interesting, he ran to tell, not his mother, but his family. They all had to be there ; the house would echo to each of our names ; and then, when we were all present, he would tell us of some newly-

discovered virtue which he had found in an unexpected place, and then would say, 'We ought to thank God for this.' He never dictated or tried to rule our conversation, but in some strange way he controlled it. There seemed to be no reins in his hands, and yet when the family coach began to sway he could 'pull up' the restive horses, and keep the vehicle from tumbling over into the ditch.

He was in one sense of the word a ritualist. Christmas was always ushered in for him by the reading of Dickens's *Christmas Carol.* At that time, if lowering clouds were beginning to cross the face of any member of the family, he reminded us of Bob Cratchitt's house, and how all anger was stilled by the words, 'It's Christmas.' It was a day with a manger in it, and with the old English mirth of carols; it was a day when he even surprised us by the fierce fire of his joys. He loved a game which was thrilling and full of the frenzy of laughter, in which the speed and pace carried every one but himself off their feet. How he laughed at us, and we at him, for that also was according to the rigour of the game. He laid it down as a working maxim of our home, 'Each can laugh at all, and all at each.' Often, scarcely had the echoes of our laughter passed away before we found ourselves at prayer. And how he prayed! It all sweeps over one as one writes; it was so intense, so direct, and withal so tender. If any one was absent, he was mentioned by name; if any one was going away, the Traveller's Psalm was

always read ; and the way in which he prayed for those who were about to leave the house, but not the home, was something which is too tender for words. My father well knew the truth of the words of W. B. Yeats : 'There is no liberty in a temple made with hands.' He was aware that this was true also of the home ; so he beckoned to his help the 'invisible angel whom we call Prayer.' He believed that that angel gave a oneness to all the family life. No man ever strove more fiercely than he to keep the lamp of prayer burning upon the altar of the home. It was by prayer that he ushered the New Year into his own home. He always came straight from the Watch-night Service, and before any one was allowed to enter, stood on the threshold and bared his head, and sang—

> Come quickly in, Thou heavenly Guest,
> Nor ever hence remove ;
> But sup with us, and let the feast
> Be everlasting love.

It was poor singing, but to us those strains speak of the music of the spheres. Morning and evening he kept the family tryst with God, and with a splendid inventiveness ever found opportunities for prayer. It was no easy task for a man with a large family and a crowded house and ceaseless engagements ; but he did it. Sometimes he snatched a victory right out of the jaws of defeat. When there were present visitors of many schools, and the room was echoing to the laughter of

merry conversation, he would with perfect naturalness plunge into the reading of the Word, and then prayer. In a strangely childlike way he would make the subjects of that evening's conversation the themes of his prayer ; would bring God's presence near to all ; and then, rising from his knees, saw to it that the stream of mirth-giving conversation flowed on as strongly as before. We learned to understand his ways ; and when those eager, inquisitive eyes of his seemed to refuse to sparkle at the passing jests of his friends, we knew that he was waiting for the first chance of claiming a victory for prayer. Prayer was to him a habit of spiritual cleanliness ; it was by prayer that he opened the windows, and let the breezes blow into his home.

My father's gift of appreciation was of a most charming type. The constant repetitions of a blessing never dulled the fine edge of his gratitude. He had a sunlit bedroom, and every morning, so my mother tells me, he said, 'What a beautiful bedroom ! We must thank God !'

My father often longed greatly for certain things, and when they were given, if we said that they were delightful, would immediately offer them to us. Some of his greatest sacrifices were relative to seemingly small things. He dearly loved a good cup of tea, and was, in this regard, a rival of Dr. Johnson. He liked it tasty and well-flavoured ; but, unfortunately for the gratification of this desire, it was often laid upon his conscience to buy it from peripatetic tea-dealers who combined

with that craft the selling of sewing machines on the weekly instalment system and insurance collecting, or from needy widows. This was one of his little denials which might well be accounted great. He went through life both denying himself and lightly holding all things material, letting life's treasures, so thought the worldly man, slip past him. Thus he dealt with honours, praise, and the trinkets of Vanity Fair ; and thus losing all he found all, and we knew at the end that he had plucked the secret out of life's mystery, that he had the Blue Bird caged and singing within his heart, that he had found a perfect peace.

It was Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century Mystic, who said : ' Mine understanding was lifted up into heaven, when I saw our Lord as a lord in His own house, which hath called all His dear worthy servants and friends to a stately feast. Then I saw the Lord take no place in His own house, but I saw Him royally reign in His own house, fulfilling it with joy and mirth, Himself endlessly to gladden and to solace His dear worthy friends, full homely and full courteous, with marvellous melody of endless love.' It is a true picture of the Lord, and it is something which makes one take knowledge of my father that he had been with Him. For he learned from this Master the art of royally reigning in his own house, and of fulfilling it with joy and mirth, and standing in it ' full homely and full courteous, with marvellous melody of endless love.'

## CHAPTER XI

### AS HIS FRIENDS SAW HIM

My father had a genius for friendship : he had, to use Gladstone's words of Lord Aberdeen, 'a habit of believing people.' A friend truly said of him, 'Never did a man have so many friends, beginning with his own children. Were his friends gathered into one room they would be found to be as various in gifts and character as was the personality for whom their love was their common focus.' His friends were found amongst ministers and golf professionals, teetotallers and publicans, cabmen and bus-drivers, footballers and cricketers, roadmen, tramps, old folk and children, rich and poor : but he had a way of stripping life of its many disguises, and of finding a oneness in his many friends. One could never account for his friendships—save by the secret magic of love—for love by its strange alchemy made even the seemingly leaden man to be golden to him. It is not surprising that many blessed this man who hailed all with the words, 'Bless you!' No wonder that some called him by that name. He really loved the crowd, but his way of doing this was to love the individual; he was truly interested in people—but by that last word he meant John

Jones, and Tom Smith, and those with whom he brushed shoulders in the street. Lately I was walking on a lonely stretch of sand not far from a crowded sea-side resort, and I said to a friend, 'My father was often here.' 'No,' he said, pointing to where the sands were black with people, 'he sat there, for he loved to be in the midst of the crowd.'

I remember he once told me that he had had a most interesting conversation with a certain young fellow. I said, 'How did you manage that? it is hard to get him to talk.' 'Oh,' he said, 'that was easy when I knew what his "line" was. We have been talking about his pet subject—bull-dogs.' He would listen, and at the same time would not be bored—he would fling himself with ardour into that conversation, and for a short time would think of nothing but his young friend's hobby. He was quite free from that trait of mind which is often so insolent, the desire of 'influencing.' That was not his line of approach: it was rather his way to see clearly the fine qualities of a man and to fire his companions with nobler desires. My father was one of the broadest men I have ever known. He often said, 'One of the essential characteristics of the truly "broad man" is the power to appreciate narrowness.' He certainly did, for to him intensity was always greater than mere breadth. He mingled with simple folk, not as a teacher but rather as a learner: he more often sat at their feet than on the raised stool of the school-

master, and thus he took people off their guard and led men to the Lord by his openheartedness, by his mirth, but above all by his faith in them. He was like unto the Stranger in Mr. Jerome's story *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*. He too had transformed the lives of the domestic slut, the shabby speculator, and of flashy and foolish folk, and he did it by seeing the best which was hidden in a man, and by appealing to it. But it was never a one-sided affair, for he would often say of those who owed much to his spiritual insight, 'I have been greatly helped by that man.' One of the many strange things about this one, who was always pouring out his love in extravagant kindness, was the way he treasured the memory of any little kindness done to him—he would speak through the years of it, and say, 'Wasn't it good of him, bless him!' We do not wonder that he had so many friends: verily he had his reward.

We will now let others speak of him. Here is one who owes much to his spiritual fervour and love, who says:—

Your father was versatile and vivacious; he went in and out like sparkling quicksilver. His affection overflowed in all his life; his unconventionality was always breaking out in some new surprise. He opened for me the door into the fullness of gospel grace. I remember vividly his preaching. It was a wonderful blend of careful scholarship and overflowing vitality. No one knew what he would say next, and there was never any doubt as to the

intensity and earnestness. He was a radiant saint, and perhaps he was seen at his best in the class-meeting. He never sat still. He sat on the table or walked to and fro from one side of the room to the other as the speaking progressed. I remember, in the midst of a very earnest reply to some brother or sister who had been mourning forgetfulness and unfaithfulness, he slapped his knee and said, 'Bless me, I am just as bad as you are; I have clean forgotten to pay the gas bill, and this is the last day;' and without any unseemly break he went on to comfort the poor distressed soul.

I was young and in lodgings, and your father opened to me the hospitality of his home. I spent many hours in his study, and saw a great deal of the beautiful affection and the unconventional homeliness of his inner life. In the middle of the morning's study he would rise suddenly to pray, and we never began our work in the study without first kneeling together at his table. The last time I stayed as his guest there was no servant in the house, and I shall never forget the mock chivalry with which he brought my boots and placed them at my feet, and told me he counted it an honour to have the privilege of blacking them. I felt like putting them in a glass case. Sometimes he came to see me, and he always filled the house with sunshine.

Again another dear friend of many years, says :—

Versatile and original as he was, the music of a particular phrase sometimes caught his ear, or the aptness of a story fascinated him, and I have noticed how he would repeat it again and again. Certain

phrases in prayer often so plaintively used by him linger sweetly in my memory still.

He was always thinking of others, forgetting time and toil and care so that he might be a minister of peace or a barrier against pain.

Few experiences have been more pleasant than to listen to his charming and brilliant talk with shrewd, clever, and well-informed men. He was so strangely and inspiringly appreciative. He saw the jewel in the most ordinary conversation, or even in common table talk, and taught us the wisdom, or the goodness, or the wit of every one. Dull people felt they would never be out of his debt for the various ways in which he taught them the worth of their own characters and ways. It is little to say that no one like him has ever come into my life or crossed my path. He made me think more beautifully of his dear Master who had given such grace to a mortal man.

My father was a brilliant conversationalist, but he had also that other gift, which rarely goes along with it—he was a *perfect listener*. He was so eager a listener that his friends and all who came to him spoke better in his presence than was their wont in other places.

And old colleague and friend writes :—

When I first met your father, he confounded while he charmed me. I could not 'locate' him in my mind. He fitted into no category and corresponded with no type familiar to me. He had an unmistakeable Scotch brogue, but a quite Continental vivacity. He was fixed in his faith, and

yet had the most audaciously open mind; he was a Puritan one moment, and in the next, some almost Bohemian vagary would surprise you. I frankly gave up trying to understand him, and gave myself to enjoying him, for I knew I had but two years as his colleague, and I was never likely to meet another child of God like this again. Child of God! Yes, that was the very phrase which you always needed to treat in some new adjectival fashion. You were always discovering some unsuspected quality, but it was ever that of an unmistakable child of God. He seemed to have it in virtue of the fact that he was a 'partaker in the divine nature,' and had 'fullness of life.' His saintliness was versatile beyond description, but it was always in evidence. His mind traversed a vast area, but in God it lived, moved, and had its being.

Chief among my impressions of his excellences is that of his utter sincerity. It was so invariable that it bewildered the average man. He never troubled about maintaining any position he might have taken up yesterday. He told you what he thought to-day; every passing mood was faithfully reflected in his words; the fleeting opinion or feeling was not concealed. You were allowed to trace processes in his thought which most men hide from view. *He always lived with the blinds up*, and you saw all the workings of his mind. Had he not been steeped in the spirit of love he could never have survived the self-exposure which was a habit with him. But his very caprices were always unselfish, and he could afford to let his friends look him through and through. I have seen him confound an old fox of a man by sheer candour. He

left the enemy breathless with surprise at a simplicity he had thought faded out of the world with Eden. The man's arts would have been a match for any arts they encountered, but artlessness dumbfounded him. The armour of light not only defended the wearer, but dismayed the assailant. How many times he has laughingly told me of the confounding artifices he might employ, too candid not to reveal what he thought of them, and then, eschewing all device, he has gone forth armed with truth alone. Of course many a rogue scored off him, but more often the rogue would compass his own downfall, for the meek have a way of inheriting the earth. Never was this servant of truth 'off duty,' and with the audacious simplicity of love he would attack an apparently impregnable fortress, and with one well-planted shot would bring a whole pile of hypocrisies toppling down. He had a short method with some of these Goliaths which worked wonders.

His hospitality knew no prudential limits; it was an endless procession of known and unknown folk that passed through his house. He was always doing some menial service for others. Never did disciple more readily follow the Lord begirdled with a towel. He was one of the most absent-minded men by nature; but love surmounted that defect, and while he was always forgetting to do things for himself, he was supernaturally alert to the needs of others. If he could 'do the stairs' or carry parcels for some one he seemed to have found a means of grace. And the Master's chosen representatives—the poor—he specially delighted to honour.

'How charming was his boyishness!' The zest with which he pursued sport is memorable to us all.

I see him suddenly quitting my side in the street and impetuously rushing to a grimy workman who had the latest edition. 'What have Yorkshire made?' he asks, and the man turns abruptly round to see youth, clad in bushy beard and whiskers, breathlessly awaiting an answer, and then, as the reply is given, the youth seems to turn suddenly patriarchal as he says, 'Thanks; God bless you!' That man did not fail to know the parson next time they met. Or I see the same eager face at a county cricket match. He is in a solid phalanx of spectators, for the most part unknown to one another, but intent upon the same scene mid-field. There comes a fast ball down the pitch from the hand of a famous bowler; like a flash of lightning the batsman cuts it to the boundary. The reverend beholder is in a frenzy of delight, and, turning to his nearest unknown neighbour, he exclaims, 'Wasn't that lovely?' The gentleman thus addressed has an amused look on his face when he has turned to see the one that spake to him, but he is soon enamoured of the juvenility of the speaker, and ere the afternoon has gone, they are like the comrades of years, and have talked of many things besides cricket.

And there is the same zest in holier pursuits. When Denholm Brash prayed you felt he was *fond* of prayer. It was no mere duty reverently discharged. He fell back upon prayer in leisure moments as naturally as he turned to it in critical times.

How well I remember one day when we were leaving his study for some circuit engagement! We had reached the hall, and were about to take our hats, when he said, 'O come back a moment'; and

as we returned to the study he said in an apologetic way, as if seeking a favour, 'Do you very much mind if we pray a moment? I shall go more cheerfully if we do.' And when he had poured out his soul in a few fervent words he just said, 'Thanks, I feel so much better.' He would suddenly feel the hunger for prayer, and like a man who could not wait the next meal, would satiate his soul at once.

And the unconventionality of his prayers never impaired your sense of reverence. He would pray for folk by name, and mention their engagements for the day, and the needs involved, as if prayer were a family conference, but the divine head of the household was addressed with a love that never failed to be blended with reverence.

Prayer was no mere exercise with him; it was repose and luxury, as well as aspiration and spiritual wrestling. And this homeliness in the presence of God often gave to those who came in contact with him a better understanding of the fashion in which the visible and invisible worlds are interfused, and showed how surely a man in Christ could, according to the wondrous pattern of the forty days after the resurrection, live a citizen alike of earth and heaven, missing no aspect of things mundane while sitting in heavenly places, uniting the life that now is with that which is to come.

Another old colleague and friend writes:—

Your father and I arrived in the same circuit on the same day. We were strangers to each other. He came to see us that first evening, and for an hour poured himself out in memories, experiences, purposes, hopes; about books, and about people.

When he had gone, we were left wondering about this new strange personality that had come into our lives. There seemed to be no walls or fences about him. He gave himself to you as to a newly-discovered brother. This, we found, was *his way*, and was part of his charm and power. *He was a city without walls.*

I remember staying at your father's to tea. We sat round the table, at first a modest party, some of the family being out. As the tea went on, friends kept dropping in. Some brought other friends. One was, I think, a converted Jew. Before the tea was over there were nearly a score of us scattered all over the room. His kind heart expanded and his face beamed, and in wise, genial talk he poured himself out, and made us feel our oneness.

His sympathy gave him insight. His life was full of illustrations of this. One of these much impressed me. A man, a widower, with a family, came to our chapel. He was a well-dressed, gentlemanly man, and his home well furnished. He was out of a situation, and about this I did all I could to help him; but it never occurred to me that he might badly need a little money. When he and his children at last found work, I discovered that sometimes they had even lacked bread. But your father, I found, had sometimes met him, had *divined* the true condition of things, and had given him now and then financial help. I felt rebuked and amazed at your father's understanding and generosity.

In the wrong he saw chiefly the human being. You had a servant for some time. She was a young widow, about twenty-seven, and sometimes she got drunk. He was sore troubled about this

habit, but was afraid to dismiss her, as she had no home, lest she should sink down to the worst things. And so he went into the kitchen when the drinking got very bad, and gave her fatherly counsel. He used to say sometimes, 'The worst of all is the evil-looking people that come to the back door to talk to her.' One morning your father came on to our house looking full of something. He sat down, and taking from his pocket a dirty cotton bag, he said, 'I found this on the stairs yesterday. It's full of pawn-tickets; they all represent circuit property—sheets, blankets, bed-covers, &c., and the things have been pawned, not in *her* name, but in the name of the evil-looking people who talk with her at the back door. What must I do with her now?' And, when I put the other side of the problem, sadly he answered, 'Ah, I see; I fear she will have to go; but the money is nothing; I will see to that.' He was so filled with pity for the human being; his heart was so tugged at by the question, 'What can I do to save her?' This was characteristic—very unconventional, and, on the spiritual side, very beautiful. I never knew him really harsh or angry with any one, however foolish and wrong they might be. These things filled him with pity, and the question, 'What can I do to help them?' was ever in his heart.

He did not care for the routine and mechanics of life. When the Conference was about to be held in Hull, he called at our house on the Monday to say 'Good-bye,' and to explain that he had made all arrangements to stay the 'full time'—nearly three weeks. He was very emphatic in stating that he 'meant to sit it out this time.' The following

Friday evening I was passing along the road, the tram went by, a clerical figure jumped out, and with umbrella under his arm and bag in hand, set off running. I reflected, 'That's the Super.; only he of women born could run like that. He is tired of routine, and has come back to *his work*.' And so it proved.

Again, one evening I met your father. He was in a great hurry, but he paused to say very emphatically, 'Brother, come, it is time we had another preachers' meeting. You must come on Friday, and I'll write our colleague.' Friday, at three o'clock, we met, and your father had an air of meaning it this time. But directly the meeting opened your father turned to our colleague and said, 'You've just been on home mission work.' He assented, and began to tell where he had been, and of some people he had met. It was ground that your father knew well, and for two mortal hours he poured himself out in story, in character-sketches, in incidents, in narratives of religious work, in pathos, and in humour. We had a rare good time, a wonderful time, much more useful for our work than an ordinary preachers' meeting. Yes, it was the heart that came first—let business routine go.

Your father had a large and good library, and had read and remembered. He was a passionate lover of books, and nothing that was good came amiss. His mind glanced and darted at things like forked lightning. Sometimes there was no keeping up with him. He left you amazed and out of breath. You seemed sometimes, when with him, to be in an intellectual fencing school and watching the play of many flashing swords. And you were amazed

that one mind wielded them all. And a counter picture to this was to see him in a big assembly of Methodists. It was his heart that then amazed you. With outstretched hand and beaming face he darted from friend to friend. He appeared and disappeared in the crowd like a disembodied emotion. He seemed to move not by muscles and bones, but by will and affection. A library set his mind darting; a crowd of friends his heart. In either case you watched and wondered.

If to be 'born again' means that we have been awakened to the reality of spirit and the spiritual world, then this man was born again in more than an ordinary way. The sense of the spiritual, the unseen, was ever present with him. It played upon all things in life, as the sunshine of a summer's day plays in endless light and shadow upon the leaves of a forest. Amid the varied play of his mind in conversation and letters, the spiritual could suddenly appear anywhere. For him there could be no incongruity, for the spiritual was the abiding background, the ever present under-consciousness. All things were in God, and the divine face could dawn at any point in his laughter or his tears, in the pathos or the tragedy of human things. He was, and is, the Eternal Child.

Our Lord tells us that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must become as a little child. That for him could never have been a difficulty. By some abiding hidden sense of the soul he seemed to love and trust God and love and trust his fellows. In his presence the critical faculty was disarmed. You simply wondered at and loved him. He brought with him things gentle and good, and they suggested

God. About spiritual things—when he came—you did not reason; like himself, you *felt* them, and wondered that you had never seen and felt them like that before. Yes, in him the child ever remained —simple, wise, spiritual. In our poor, conventional, worldly sense, he never 'grew up.' That was the wonder, the charm, the power, of his presence.

He made the piece of our life, when we lived and worked together in old Great Homer Street, rich in heart, in sentiment, in spiritual suggestion. The purple still lingers over those years. We often go back to them in memory. Especially do we go back to them when certain human types, far too common, make life, by our staring at nothing but hard and cold facts, seem bare and wintry. Oh, then, for an hour with our vanished friend! How he would touch the facts with love and faith and suggestions of the eternal!

Another colleague and friend said of him :—

'There is a better world they say—but it's hard to believe it.' So Denholm Brash spake. It was a truly characteristic utterance. He had

> . . . learned the angel art
> While on earth in heaven to be,
> God, by sense unseen, to see.

His sick-room was the King's ante-chamber; it was redolent of heaven's fruit. Tough-minded men were conscious of the gracious influence, and under the spell of his presence besought his blessing.

Were I to describe his life, could I do it better than by quoting Charles Wesley—

Careful without care I am,
  Nor feel my happy toil.
Kept in peace by Jesu's name,
  Supported by His smile:
Joyful thus my faith to show,
  I find His service my reward,
*Every work I do below,*
  *I do it to the Lord.*

His piety, far from making him a recluse, led him into the world. Because he was so truly a saint, he was the more a man. He loved life. To the last, nothing human, not even life's pastimes and gaieties, were foreign to him. The secret lay in his possession of a deep-seated 'faith that sweetly worked by love.' Though he was naturally light-hearted, his faith was not an airy and easy optimism. He was, indeed, no stranger to conflict; but about his faith there was something natural and artless, which suggested the intuitive trust of the child who is sure of his father.

A delightful feature in his character was his sublime faith in man. He had the love that thinketh no evil. Did any one ever hear him speak a word in malice or to another's detriment? Even in the sin-blighted, shadow-drenched men and women of our slums he saw something noble and right, which only wanted liberating in order to produce a worthy man. With his winning way he would join a knot of men at a street corner, listen to their talk, then take his part, and so turn the conversation, that before they knew it they were thinking and speaking like the 'good fellows' which, in parting, he so often called them. Because he spoke the truth in love he could 'tell every man plainly what he thought

of him.' He could say the necessary unwelcome word to edification. It was an excellent oil, that did not break the head.

The same motive guided his pulpit ministrations. His gospel was the free gospel of God's grace. He preached as though he were sure that men would believe the truth if only they could see it, and receive the love if only it were made manifest. So he laboured in the word and doctrine; by exposition, argument, appeal, homely illustration, frequent flash of mother-wit and humour, striving to commend his Saviour. Impatient of the restraint of mere proprieties, he would throw conventionality to the winds, and become all things to all men, often taking the standpoint of those that were far off in order that he might bring them nigh, and by all means save some. He wooed to surrender and charmed to submission. And many believed through his word.

He has wielded a peculiarly winsome and gracious influence, which grew in its sweet constraint with greater intimacy. All loved him. But they who knew him best prized him most, and the numerous children whom God gave to his ministry, no less than the children of his family, rise up and call him blessed. And to us all, from the joy of the Lord into which he has abundantly entered, he cries, 'Think on whatsoever things are lovely.'

Another friend says :—

Mr. Brash by an instinct penetrated past all irrelevances and discovered human beings, and generally wanted to bring them home. He lived in a world that some of us never enter, the world of living men and women. When he might have been

writing books or making a reputation, he frequented the steep hills like a volunteer trace-horse, and helped the heavier loads to the top. He went about inviting everybody to tea, and nearly everybody came; and unless he remembered that he mustn't, he probably asked them to stay the night. I do not know that I ever knew any one who, in so reckless and unconditional a way, gave away his heart.

Another friend writes :—

I well remember hearing him preach on a week-night on 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' a sermon whose influence is a lingering fragrance still. He had drunk deep of the cup of life, and the joy of living was an exhilaration to him. To visit his bedroom was a means of grace. No cloud eclipsed his sun. His last days were truly autumn days—rich in colour, mellow in quality, and golden in fruitfulness.

Another friend, amongst other things refers to a strange and beautiful trait in my father's character—*he had no age consciousness*. He could speed down the years so as to be able to be of the same age as a young lad, and if he had met Methusaleh he would he would have felt no disparity in years betwixt himself and this primeval ancient. He was quite young enough to say of many a student's preaching, 'He greatly blessed me,' and quite old enough to listen with glowing joy to the rich sermon of a patriarch. For this 'Youth who refused to grow up' had all

that is most beautiful in joyous age and happy youth, and loved both, for he knew that Eternal Life folds both within its warm embrace. The same friend writes :—

I have been trying, as a sort of acknowledgement of debt, to put down something of the impression your father left on me. I feel there is some presumption in my claiming a friendship with your father, for I only met him five or six times, and there were, I suppose, thirty years between us. All I can say is, it was his fault, and he was always doing it. The first time I met him was at his own house. I went in a stranger, but I was quite cured in three minutes. There were no preliminaries, no cautious overtures, no intermediate civilities, no probationary period. He gave his friendship instantly and recklessly. It was sudden and free like the grace of God; indeed, it was the grace of God.

*It cannot be an easy thing as a rule for an older man to bridge the gulf of about thirty years, and put himself alongside a younger generation.* It never occurs to most men to try, and they have no idea how remote and inaccessible they are. I can't say that your father bridged the gulf. It simply wasn't there; he waved his wand and it was gone. I understood better afterwards where the secret was. *Strictly speaking he did not grow old.* If there was a stale thought in his mind, he never showed it. He never acquired that look of superhuman wisdom which makes many ministers so depressing, and he had no disillusioned tones. If I wanted to maintain that selfishness is always a deadening thing—slow suicide—and that love is

always a vitalizing thing, I should think of your father as my shining instance of the second proposition. Every talk I had with him was an event. On his part a conversation was what some old fellow said early Methodist preaching was—'a cordial communication of vitalized truth.' He talked like a man who found all men worth knowing, all knowledge worth getting, and all discoveries worth sharing. I wonder sometimes that we endure the insufferable tedium of those superficial exchanges which pass for conversation. Don't you feel with some people that it doesn't matter what you say or what they say? Your conversation is like the click of two billiard balls; it signifies that you have met, and nothing more. But your father used to talk as if it mattered—and it did; and he used to listen, strange to say, as if that mattered too. His intellectual zest was a joy to see, and his range of interests more than once surprised me. But he had a deceptive way of assuming the learner's part when he might have spoken with authority. What lay behind that and most of the other things that I loved in him was just this—that God had baptized him into the love of human kind. Would I might attain to such a baptism!

You remember my mentioning a little meeting where he was speaking to a few score people, most of them with weary faces, more accustomed to endurance than to joy? In the midst of his address, his voice broke suddenly into a cry of indescribable compassion over 'this sad, mad world.' The pity of it fell on me like a revelation; it was the immediate communication of a vision of the world, with its mass of gratuitous misery and blind need. Perhaps

it was only a moment's illumination with some of us; with him it was, as you know well, the central fire.

I must be done. You will understand what I have been trying to say, for your father had that happiness that in his own home he was known for what he was. But I am afraid that I could not convey to any who did not know him anything but the barest hints of one who lived a sacramental life, breaking the bread of God to the hungry wherever he went.

A missionary friend writes :—

I find it hard to imagine what the home circle is like without him whose personality made such a vivid difference whenever he found a congenial atmosphere. I do not know that I have ever come across a home in which the spirit of affection and unselfishness was more radiantly manifested than in yours. What a charming saint he was! So human in his love of fun, so Christlike in his tenderness and thoughtfulness! I cannot tell you how much it has meant to me that in the very beginning of my public work in the ministry I came under the influence of his personality. It is men like your father who make it easy to believe in the goodness of God. I shall never forget what I owe to his kindness and sympathy.

This friend of the East suggests in the use of the phrase, 'congenial atmosphere,' that my father was sensitive to his surroundings. No man was more so : that of sorrow and sympathy and love seemed to stir to ready response every fibre of his

being. He was sometimes wrapped in cold mists and shadows, by hauteur, by the arrogance of riches, learning, and station, by any depreciation of his fellow men, and by the critical temper ; but more often the sun of his love pierced even these clouds, and flooded and made all bright with its kindly rays.

A young friend writes :—

Those of us who are young loved Mr. Brash as a father, a brother, and a friend, and it is but fitting that one who is young and saw him only in these latter years should tell of this love to the world. It added to the joy of his evening to be so near Handsworth College, and many students have come under his winsome spell. He lived intensely, as the young live, and loved intensely, as the young love —children, freedom, sport, and books. He studied Greek in his last illness as if his future career depended upon it. His eyes were marvellously, shiningly sympathetic as he listened to any story of souls won and sins forgiven. To have taken tea with him as he lay on what is now the bed of death, to have exchanged good stories with him, to have enjoyed his humour, free from flippancy, his reminiscences, told without garrulity, to have laughed with him and loved him for his laughter, to have ended the visit with the prayer that came readily and naturally in such a presence—these are memories for a lifetime. For the prayer was the centre of it all, and Christ was ever in the room with us, and we were glad, because we had something to be glad about in the presence of the Master. It sometimes seems to a young man as if the *summum*

*bonum* were to grow old gracefully, and to be loved at the last by the young. Father Brash, as we would call him, had won the *summum bonum*—save that he never grew old at all. We youngsters grew better when with him. He did not try to reform us. He just loved us, and unconsciously we grew better for the love. He was so gladly human, as well as so radiantly holy; and St. Francis, for one, will have rejoiced on Friday last in the land of light; and though some of us sit lingering here a little mournful, there is a strange awe and sweetness in the thought that his presence is still with us whenever we enter into the innermost shrine and join in the communion of saints in the worship of Jesus.

Another young friend writes :—

From such an array of beautiful characteristics as is called up by his name it is hard to choose the greatest, but his 'loving-kindness' is the outstanding trait that not only those who knew him best, but those who came only casually into contact with him, will remember with tenderness. How he loved every one, especially 'those who were of the household of faith!' How eagerly would he seek out, even when on holiday, the brother-minister, superannuated by affliction from active work, to encourage and help him by his sympathy, to cheer him with his humour and his jollity, to stimulate him with his wide and varying interests! And in what good stead that wonderful fund of quiet humour stood him through the days of pain and weakness and weariness through which God's veteran passed, and from which he is now released! One revered him

as a saint, but loved him as a man, a man who radiated such love as compelled a willing love in return.

Another close friend says :—

It was always touching to hear him speak of his Shetland experiences. He loved his people. He saw the greatness of their lives lived in such isolation. Like every experience of his life, he filled it with chivalry and romance. Nothing that had ever touched him was ordinary to him. He endowed it all with humour and pungency and splendour.

When he was in Manchester, he gained Miss Bardsley, who to the end of his life gave that which was perfectly complementary to him in every detail of their home-life and ministry together. Their home was always radiant, and the doors were ever open for social life, for comfort, for practical help to whomsoever needed it. His preaching was attended by what were to him often totally unexpected results. It was very simple and very deep, and always close to life. In his later years he spoke with even greater tenderness, wooing men to Christ with irresistible gentleness. He was one who loved to preach the gospel of perfect love. Nor did he ever alienate the most critical or worldly-minded hearer by the childlike simplicity of his evangelism. They reverenced it and received it; and many a man far outside the bounds of any organized Church knows that in him he saw Christ, and is ever thankful for the reality of the vision.

He was not a Conference man. Statistics and committees, he knew, were not his way of work. He ministered to the individual, and knew the way

with the rare boldness of loving into every heart which he encountered. He had none of our English stiffness. He spoke with every one, and no one resented it. He treated the poor exactly like the rich, and the rich as he would treat the poor. His life-motto was, 'Love, and do what you like,' and his whole code of manners and of chivalry is contained therein. He had fine literary taste, was always an ardent lover of all healthy outdoor games, was a fierce lover of freedom, and a keen observer of the political world. He could talk with all men, and he used his many-sided mind as an asset for Jesus Christ. With him, wherever men started, they were sure to end at the great topic of his life—the irresistible love of God as shown in His Son. No one needy in mind, body, or estate, ever came to him in vain. He gave with a reckless faith which was always vindicated.

His spirit rose ever more and more radiantly over each new physical limitation. In his last months he held court in his bedroom, and who shall estimate the value of that spirit's influence, so holy and so gay, which filled that room and ministered to every one that came there? His was pre-eminently the culture of the humanities, and his library showed that. He had a genius for living, and his Bible was his great love among all books, for he understood it as not many can. He knew both the mystic's awe and rapture in the presence of the Infinite, and the prophet's fiery love of freedom and justice.

We cannot speak of such a man as 'dead.' His vitality rises triumphant over our material views of death. He is clothed in glorious immortality,

and we thank God for the unending ministry of this child of His, 'Not too bright and good for human nature's daily food'; yet who ever saw Him who is invisible, because he habitually thought on those things which were lovely and of good report.

A friend of his, a frequent contributor to *Punch*, says :—

I cannot forget the eagerness with which he rushed to the aid of every one in trouble, and I am sure that his death will leave a blank in thousands of homes. Frankly speaking, parsons are not much in my line; but I always felt that your father was so much broader and kindlier and more sympathetic than the ordinary minister, that he was a type by himself. It was a great privilege to have known him, to have enjoyed his kindly humour, and to realize that at any rate there was one man without the touch of anything that was base in him. He always reminded me of those lines the old poet wrote about Sir Philip Sidney:

> Continual comfort in his face,
> The lineaments of Gospel books.

I am sure no one ever had or ever deserved to have a happier life.

Another says of him :—

Francis of Assisi will hail him with joy, and they will go walks together. How well he knew where to touch the springs of loyalty in us all! He was the most childlike wise of all the Christians I have met—shrewd, far-seeing, and *in*-seeing, yet with

the guileless joy of a true child of God. And what a blending of qualities—Scotch, French, and Saxon too! He fairly made one's heart dance at the variety of his surprises. He will make Paradise the gayer for his entrance.

Another friend writes :—

I think my own lasting impression of him was of the gaiety of holiness—so to speak, saintliness, without a shadow of that excessive seriousness that often spoils it. He was a holy man, but Mr. Richard Swiveller would not have got into another carriage at the station so as to avoid travelling with him. And how like the Lord that debonair goodness is!

Still another says of him :—

My last conversation with Mr. Brash, some months ago, was of such a sacred character that, strange as it may sound, I felt I could not face the ordeal again. I never passed through such an experience of such self-abasement as I did during that short conversation with him on the deep things of the soul. I shall cherish its memory as one of the most precious treasures of my spiritual life.

A friend said in beautiful words that which is true : 'Never shall we see again any one so human, so holy, and so sweetly strange.'

An American said that he was 'the biggest thing I ever saw.' This friend had often seen the Rockies and Niagara, had crossed the prairies and the Atlantic again and again ; but he was right. For love is higher than Rockies,

more wide-stretching than prairies, more torrential than the falls, more deep than the unfathomed sea. Love is, indeed, the biggest thing.

We have referred to no names, for to do that would be to exclude. These messages are sung in unison by the great chorus of his friends. Yet though we have not named the living, we cannot refrain from mentioning the one who, to use the beautiful Celtic phrase for those who have crossed the River, is among *the Ever-living*—Percy C. Ainsworth. He wrote to my father and said :—

So you are retiring this Conference. Forty-four years' work! I think it is just splendid. Compared with the self-regarding interest and strength practised by some in these days, your forty-four years is a hundred and forty-four. My small experience of life has taught me that the few things that really matter—the essentials—have a way of following and meeting every kind of circumstance. As to what these things are, heaven forbid that I should go on to say, having learned them somewhat better through seeing them reflected in your life. I used to feel that your invincible cheerfulness and your interest in life at once both did my heart good and put me to shame. Somehow, for you, the dew has never passed from the leaves of life. You are worth half a dozen of us youngsters any day. I endeavoured in a recent letter to tell you something of what I owe and of how I feel towards you. I pray that God's great peace may hold your heart, and that the light

of the things you have lived for will shine still more brightly for you.

Then there is the beautiful PS. 'When you were at the Central Hall Noon-day Service, when I preached, I knew I was bound to have a good time. *We* took the service, and I say, many thanks.'

They held sweet communion in this world, and now these two ever-living ones have loving talks and walks in the 'land o' the leal.'

We have printed only a few of these love-letters —a host of his many friends write in this most musical of all strains—Love. But there are some we cannot show you. Why ? How is that ? They were never written, for they could not be. The fairest tributes are those songs without words which many miners, and labourers, and servants, and fishermen, and lowly sons of toil heard within their hearts, but could not, through lack of literary expression, place upon paper. We have shown many pictures of him, but no one can limn the most beautiful of all—the one which would show him dwelling in the homes of the poor, listening to their stories, and talking to them out of his loving heart, sitting at their tables, and by his homeliness making even the most timid and anxious housewife forget her fears and say, 'He can stay to dinner any time ; he is just one of us, and we love him.'

He needs no testimonials nor advertisements— he stands revealed in the beauty of his love. For

it is of love that he speaks. When we search the heart of all that is said of him, we know that they all speak of sacrificing, yet happy, love. His attitude to the Lord is shown in the words of a great Mystic—'Lo! how I loved him!' and we, too, find our best picture of him in the words—

**Lo! how *he* loved Him!**

## CHAPTER XII

### SUPER DAYS

SOME one has well noted that amidst all the modern talk about Super-man it is well to think also about Super days—those days of an abiding beauty and strange thrill which come to all of us. Some find them when the face of nature is aflame with glory; others when they look into the eyes of the lover; and some have met them when love spoke to them of mirth and of weakness. It was thus my father spoke to us in his last four years. We had our treasure; but frost and east wind and a little excitement told us that it was in an earthen vessel. In these super days we lived in a world of beautiful joys, but we felt that any moment the avalanche might come and sweep away the happy village of our life. His frailty made us have a new interest in the weather. The frost on the pane, the snow on the ground, filled us with a trembling fear for him. But his soul abode in strength amidst the house of his frail body. For four years after his seizure he lived with us, and these

were amongst his most potent days. His life up to this time had been lived at an alarming pace. To his people he was known as 'Mr. Brash, who always runs when he walks!' His days had been crowded with meetings and journeyings; he had not known rest, and had always refused to be tethered. He loved the day crowded with work, and one was not able to think of him living the life of an invalid. We had always thought it would be best for him to die in harness. We feared that he would pine away when his body was not able to move at the high speed of his eager soul. But we had to find out that, even in his sickness, he had fresh surprises for us. He did not throw away his harness, nor 'settle' down, nor 'retire,' nor become a 'supernumerary.' He was still in the active work, and he taught us that a tired body may be the home of a campaigning and crusading soul. He was now travelling in another circuit, and as it was the one to which his Lord had called him, he laboured in it with great and exceeding joy. It was a circuit of sick-room, of medicine bottles, of short walks when the sun shone, of many friends, and of laughter and prayer! His bedroom became a wide-stretching world: in it we tramped over the purple heather of many spiritual moorlands, where God's breezes beat upon the soul. He was a mystery to us all, for he was a mere

tyro in pain, and suddenly he had been called to a campaign of stern and severe suffering; and, to our amazement, he flinched not, but bore it all with a happy smile.

He was thought not to have much sense of order in his life, in a word, to be unmethodical. But that was a very superficial judgement of him. The truth was that he did not keep to the time-table because the lover never can. He generally had to gallop to catch his train, but that was not because he left too little time, but because he could not pass rheumatic Mrs. Smith without giving her a cheery word, nor fly past the child without dropping a penny into its hand. The call of need comes at irregular moments; and as he always answered it eagerly, no matter when or whence it came, it was impossible for him to attain to the order and method of the unimaginative and cool-blooded man. But this is not to say that he was without order, but that it had always to give way to need.

Now, when it was, through bodily frailty, impossible for him to answer in person the call of sorrow, one saw that there was in him an amazing and unsuspected world of order. He still mapped out his study for each morning, and never touched a light work of literature until after dinner. He could not give up his work—for two reasons: he had not yet received his Master's discharge, and

then, again, he loved it. I well remember, when he was convalescent, seeing him in his room, and asking what he had been doing. He said, 'I have been working at a sermon.' I asked him the text, and the answer was, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' It was his first since his stroke, and he preached it in every action of the next few years, and he believed it with all his soul.

He had always a great love for the Greek language, but the claims of a busy life had denied him the joy of giving much time to this study. Now was his hour and opportunity. He gave himself to the study of Greek with such avidity that we feared it would hurt his health. Even when the doctor told him that he would be better without it, he worked on the 'sly' at his Greek grammar and Testament. He followed a course of Greek lessons, and he was working for a goal, for he had made up his mind to face the examination at the end of the quarter. But just about the time for the answering of the papers he became worse in health, and was sent to bed, and all study was forbidden to him. But the advice of a doctor in comparison with the claims of Greek was to him less than nothing. So he faced his questions, and was answering them when the doctor came. There was no time for dallying, so the papers and answers were pushed under the blankets. He should have been discovered,

for that look of innocence which he wears as he speaks is only a mask which hides a great crime. But he hoodwinks even that faithful attendant who loved him with such a pure love. He waits until the carriage rolls away, and then his examination continues. He was then over seventy, and, among other maladies, had at that time some respiratory trouble. Perhaps that accounts for the examiner's report: 'A very good paper, but *weak in breathings*!'

When the weather was fine he was able to worship in the neighbouring church at Somerset Road. He set out for these services with a drum beating in his boyish heart. He would say in an eager and excited way, 'I wonder what the text will be!' Every part of the sermon was to him sacramental, and this hungry hearer always found in God's house a table prepared for the banquet. This young old man was so appreciative of the preachers as to be able to say, 'The preaching of to-day is much better than I have ever known it before.' He always spoke to the preacher, for he said, 'I must give him the encouragement for which I yearned so much myself in my preaching days.' To see him in the congregation was to the writer something which made the whole service vibrate with the thrill of joy and ecstasy. One can see him now—he is seated during the hymns: in the prayer one becomes doubly conscious of his presence by the tremulous voice

which says 'Amen,' and in the sermon he even dares to say, 'Praise the Lord!' There he sits with his filmy eyes making all one's commonplaces to be instinct with life and love. Then, when the service ended, he would speak some heartening word, and say, 'You did me good this morning.' He little knew that his own love and aspirations ministered more to his heart than any words of the preacher, and that he made the service great by his awareness of Christ's presence and by his prayers. Since his going one has more than once thought of those words which Disraeli spoke when he lost that sister to whom he gave such a full love. 'I have lost my audience.' And I too!

And yet one is led to a fuller truth when one recalls a story he was so fond of telling. It speaks of a blind officer whose son was in a public school cricket eleven. The father died, and the son, when he next played in a match, made a big score, and, after his innings, said, 'I am glad I played well to-day, for it is the first time my father has *seen* me bat.' Which things are an allegory, and tell us that one may learn to say, 'I have retained my audience.'

In these last years it was a trouble to him that he was not able to take any active service in the sanctuary. He was too frail to preach, but there was lurking in his mind a desire to take the collection-plate. He told us about this one day, and said, 'If I did that I should

feel that I was doing a little service for the Lord.' But his temple service was not to be in that task; yet he was ever a priest in God's House. Those yearning eyes and that hungry look of his told the minister that there was at least one in his congregation who was excitedly waiting for the message of God's Word. Thus he helped the preacher: and gave and received inspiration. Monday morning often found my father writing to tell the minister the blessing that had come to his heart through the sermon. One is led to believe that each moment of his last four years speaks of temple worship. For his hours, in church, in sick-room, in his social joys, were all lived in the atmosphere of love. He was very fond of speaking about 'creating an atmosphere.' Now this is what he did. I was speaking but yesterday to one who met him only a few times, and he said, 'I never knew any one who created such an atmosphere of Christlike love as your father.' This was the air he breathed, and he found it most bracing.

In consequence of his illness he had to confine himself to a diet which, to use his own word concerning it, was 'fissinless,'[1] but his spiritual food spoke of the dainties of the banquet of life—of adventure, of romance, of campaigns, and of crusades. He followed the fortunes of an election with all the eagerness

[1]Anglicè = tasteless (*cp.* Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*).

of one whose life was dependent upon the result, and in some quaint and mysterious way felt that he was still in the thick of the fight. And once again he was right. He taught us all that a man can be a supernumerary while he is travelling in a circuit, and that an invalid can be in active work and in the main fighting-line while he is shut up within the narrow limits of his bedroom. For it was from him that we learnt the truth that a man with a loving heart and a fiery imagination and a hungering soul is always upon the high places of the field.

It was during these years that he broke all Methodist laws by entering into business. As it was never discovered, one had better tell now the story of this breach of Methodist discipline. He financed a poor man and woman at the opening of every working week. He gave them their needful capital for the next few days, and at the close they paid him back what they could. How interested he became in this venture! The floating of a huge company was as nothing to him in comparison with this enterprise. For to him it spoke, not of money, but of two lives, and he was feverishly anxious that they might be able to crawl out of the abyss of poverty. He was a partner in losses, and in nothing else—save in that best profit which came to him towards the close of his days in knowing that he had saved two simple souls

from anxious care and ruin. A few days after he died the woman asked the question, 'Is Mr. Brash's will proved?' Perhaps she was expecting a legacy: but that was not to be. The inquiry suggested some opulence. My father did leave a large estate of love and influence, but as to bullion, he had never thought about storing that; and it was with a flush of great joy and pride that we found that his savings after forty-eight years of joyous service were —thirty shillings. He was truly of the tribe of St. Francis. He did not wear the cowl nor rope, and he owned one sovereign and a half, but such trifles cannot hinder him now from walking with that Umbrian Saint in the land of love.

These were our Super days, and the very fact that soon death would come for him seemed to give unutterable and trembling beauty to them all. One can never forget, when one laid one's head on the pillow at night, the last thought was, 'How will he fare through the night?' and then in the early morning there was the swift glance at his window, and an anxious entrance into his bedroom, and there we saw a fairer sunshine than that which streamed through the window, for it came from his joyous heart. He is reading the paper, and is more jocund than a jester. He is radiant as he speaks of the love of his Lord, and then with a perfect and childlike naturalness he discusses the pros-

pects of a certain cricket match, and next talks of a sermon. The stolid man could not understand a mind like my father's. It was of the chamois type; it leaped with fine daring and disregard of dangers; but every portion of his life was under the rule of Christ. It is quite true that his mind leapt, but never beyond the territory of the King. It was always 'so good of you to come'; at least, that is what he said. He never suspected that the pull of his heart drew us as irresistibly as the law of gravitation draws the stone to the earth. That little room —how big it is and how holy it is to those who know the story of his sufferings! He never murmured, but took his medicine, and looked at the clock, and said, 'Only three minutes more.' He knew the average length of his attack. One cannot say more—for it is not well to talk of his agony—save to say that he prayed the more earnestly and waited the Father's will. In passing through the tumult of an attack, he was always sure that he would come out into the light. But whether it was to be the light of this world or the next he knew not. Sometimes he would wistfully say, 'I am wearying awa', Bill' (the Scotch and the truth almost made my heart stop beating); but it was a subject upon which he did not linger, for he was a man of lightning moods, and before the echo of those words had died away, weak in body though he was,

he was laughing merrily about the last joke in *Punch*.

We often told him that he was looking better, and he pretended to agree with us; but I do not think we were able to make him believe all those messages which love lured us to give to him. It was a mystery for long to us that he bore his pain so bravely, for he was a finely-strung man, and his nerves were singularly sensitive to the slightest touch of pain. In his days of health the toothache gave him the pains of the Spanish Inquisition, and in many dramatic ways he told us so. Yet when his body was so frail, and when the pain was racking, he fought his way through without a word of complaint. The only signs he gave us were flung to us involuntarily; the drawn face, the wet forehead, and that hunted look in the eyes which seemed to warn us of the fact that he was pursued by battalions of anguish. He was not willing to tell us. Most of all he thought of my mother, his lover of the many years, and it was his way to keep from her the full story of his pain. This was one reason for his silence; but there was another, for in the watches of the night he once said to his nurse, 'I could not bear my pain if I did not think that in some small way the Master will let me fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.' This was his mystic secret that told him of a divine

alchemy which could transmute the bitterness of pain into the sweetness of a love-offering to God.

These were our Super days and his. Until his illness it was hard to catch him, and to make him sit down, for poor man and women needed him in the streets of the suburbs and in the alleys of the slums, but now he was always with us. They were years in which pain might come at any moment, but there are some wooded glens of peace in the mind's memory of these days, some adventures of high and great interest, some long journeyings and trampings of the soul. My father met each attack as it came, paid the bill, and when it had gone, forgot it. There must have been some prophet of disaster waving the flag of distress within his heart, so as to warn him that another attack would come soon. But he took little notice of it; he never crossed his bridges until he came to them, neither did he put up his umbrella before it rained. His bedroom did not speak of pain, or age, or of the limited: it told of laughter, of youth, and of wide prairies of adventure, and high peaks of vision and faith. When I went to see him I often said to myself, 'I will arise, and go now, and go to see *Life*.' For his room spoke of vibrant, tingling, and throbbing life. His eyes were full of wonder, and his heart full of great escapades and glowing adventures. He took his pain and all the trials of his days,

and said, 'They say there is a better land, but it is hard to believe.' Thus he was a true pilgrim, for it is only stupid people who think that the vision of the loveliest city in the loveliest land dims the pilgrim's eyes to the fair beauties of this world. He did not make the most of two worlds; but as he lived to be worthy of that city with foundations, God counted him worthy to find along the dusty road of traffic and toil and pain the well of deep joys which only the true pilgrim can discover. These wells were at many stages of the day's road: he found one deep spring of pure, sparkling water in the morning reading of the Bible and hymn-book; another when his hands were clasped in prayer (how childlike he was to the end! I think God had for him a mother's knee, and at it he knelt like a tiny bairn). The sight of a postman always gave him a thrill of joy. When able he loved to get up early to shake hands with the postman. (He invented this new delight: 1 Cor. xiii. led him to make this magnificent discovery—that the bearer of your letter does you honour when he shakes hands with you.) No wonder that the postman said at the end, 'I've lost a friend.' Then the newspaper brought him a thousand excitements, and if there were a general election, an almost endless number. (It says much for his doctors that during his last four years he lived through two such contests!) Then there were his letters, and

reading, and his friends. I cannot tell you how they thrilled him, for language is a feeble thing. I can see him now talking quietly—now he is listening, and then says joyously, 'It is the car.' He said 'car,' but he meant friend. He was thinking of one who greatly loved him, and whom he greatly loved. And so the day has brought another adventure. The friend sits on the bed and rolls cigarettes and unrolls stories—how brilliant he is! but how can he be anything else, for think of his audience: an old man who is a perfect listener, with eager eyes and a heart full of hilarity. One of his greatest victories came one day when talking with this true friend; in the midst of the telling of a story my father became subject to a heart attack, and refused to allow the tale to be stopped. His face was white with pain, and yet his body was quivering with laughter, and not even 'Angina' could fully restrain his humour. I do not think he would have feared to have left this world to the accompaniment of a merry and mirthful story. For all his laughter spoke of the clean, childlike heart: in story-telling and listening he clove to Izaak Walton's maxims that one's 'conceits should be neither Scripture jests nor lascivious jests.' No line of hymn nor passage of Scripture was ever permitted by him to be a subject of mirth. No one carried the doubtful story to him: he was too pure to listen to garbage.

He knew full well that the mind has its 'whispering-gallery,' and he took great pains to have only pure words echoing within it.

The romantically young always gave to him the joy of colour and movement, especially those who were answering the vocation which was the joy of his life. They sat at the feet of this merry saint, and knew that here lessons were to be learned greater than those of the schools. Besides, they all were scholars together. There is a saying of my father's which tells us this: 'We are all scholars, but we all sometimes play truant.' There was the parry and thrust, the laughter and the gaiety; and then, without any break, while the echoes of mirth's voice could still be heard, prayer. Thus his friends came to see him, and they brought colour and romance and holy mirth. But his greatest adventure of each day was to be found in his 'ain folk.' He loved company and conversation, but none so much as that of his wife and children. He and my mother were the centre of all those Super days. He had given all his love to the world, and so he had kept it all for his home.

These times are gone now; and yet they are with us for ever. Towards his last days I often quoted to him the words of Henry Newbolt's fine poem, 'The Fighting *Temeraire*.' How he loved it! But I knew that there was another *Temeraire* being tugged into harbour,

and that death would break his body all too soon. He was as a ship floating for the last time down the river of life—but with all flags flying.

Thus, when Death destroyed his body, we knew that he still stood central, telling us that the songs of those Super days are with us for ever. When the sunset breezes shivered, he faded peacefully and quietly down the river into the harbour of eternal joy and peace.

There is a sentence of one of his family prayers that often haunts me. 'When the drowsiness of the last great sleep falls upon us, may we all go trooping in through the gates of the city, and be for ever with the Lord.' On June 7, 1912, the drowsiness of that last great sleep fell upon him, and he awoke in the presence of the Lord, whose service was the Passion of his life, and whose face is the Beatific Vision.

## CHAPTER XIII

### DID WE LOSE HIM?

THERE was a certain fitness about my father's home-going. He was always full of surprises, and he was true to his character to the end. For the last six months he had been a prisoner—as he was a prisoner of the Lord he was really 'at large' —within the walls of his bedroom. But little by little he was gathering strength, and we were looking forward to a merry summer with him. On the Wednesday of the week in which the Lord sent a messenger for him, a gift came to him from his friend of the many years and memories. It was a box of roses, the earliest blooms of his garden; he had watched them eagerly, for he wished these first flowers to perfume the bed-room of his friend. There never were such roses! At least, so thought my father. They were placed near to him, and he said again and again, 'Cooke's roses!' Little did we think that before the roses had withered they would be lying upon the breast of my father. On the Thursday of

that week he was dangerously ill. Towards the close of the evening a lady arrived whose mother was my father's housekeeper in his Shetland days. She had never called on us before, but she was with us when he crossed the river. Thus my father's first circuit was linked to his last, not only by the roses, but also by the visit of this friend. Through the night he drew nearer and nearer to the banks of the river, and on the morning of Friday, June 7, 1912, he crossed to the other side. 'And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable: the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last not much above wet-shod.'

In my schoolboy days I often put my head under the blankets and sobbed bitterly because I thought that death would some day come and snatch my father from me. Life to me then—so I dreamed—could only spell disaster, for I thought of Death as a foe who dealt out devastating blows. But the thoughts and dreams of boyhood were false. Death came not as a foe, but as a friend; and his mystic message was Life. We said, not, 'God's finger touched him and he slept,' but, 'and he lives.' For that is what his passing taught us. In the days of his flesh this eager and active soul had a way of standing before you in unlikely spots and in unexpected moments. This is just what he still does, for after his soul had

flown out through the window of his bedroom it came in through the front door. He had kept his biggest surprise to the end.

'We laid him in a large upper room whose windows opened towards the sunrising, and the name of that chamber was Peace.' All about him spoke of this, and whispered in our ears, 'Nothing is here for tears, . . . nothing but well and fair.' The room of life was eloquent in its symbolism, for there were all those things about him which spoke of his tasks and his friends and his enthusiasms. One can see them now as they were then. The faces of loved ones look down upon him from the walls; the city of his dreams is near to him, with the fair vision from the Calton Hill; by his bedside there is his cricket-score book, which speaks of his boyhood and his many tall scores and his devotion to the sward. Here on the table lies his Greek New Testament and his Initia Graeca (is not Initia somewhat significant? there is more to follow); then there are his books of devotion, his Bible and his well-worn hymn-book, and his daily paper, and his *Punch*. His room thus told the story of what he was; for its message was of God, of Song, and of the World, of the merry story, of sport, of his friends. When he was carried to his last, and first, earthly resting-place, it was as a triumph. When the carriage drove away from our house, a furniture van was near our door, and it was a fit symbol.

He was not lost to us, he was only 'removing.' We passed an Italian organ-grinder on the way to the service: he would have liked that. When he was carried into the church, the street children cheered, and there was a certain fitness in this. For here once again the child by intuition had seen into the heart of things, and knew that it was good. The whole service spoke of a veteran's victory. The congregation told of his truly catholic mind, for there were, amongst the worshippers, Nonconformists of all schools, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and some who did not know that they had any religion until they had met my father. The students whom he had loved so much were all present: he would have liked that.

My father loved to quote some words which Dr. Rendel Harris spoke at a graveside, 'Your child is not here: the cemetery is the emptiest place in Birmingham.' We remembered those words that day. It was good to know that many of his friends were there, and amongst them many poor folk from his old mission, Newtown Row. One was a poor rheumatic, who had tramped some four miles to pay her tribute to a minister who had left them twenty years before. Just as they laid his body to rest, the sun, which had been fighting with heavy clouds and driving rain, broke out, and flooded his grave with light, and this had its healing message for us. It

was so like him; he knew how to burst through the darkest clouds and wild rain, and to fill the spaces of our lives with sunshine.

There his body lies: he is near to a chapel which is used by all the Churches, and which reminds us of his catholicism, which knows not the warring speeches of the sects, and whose language is Love. Standing by his grave one can see two golf courses, the tower of Handsworth College, and a beautiful prospect of country, and in summer the air is full of the song of larks: this also would have been to his liking.

As we drove away we saw a familiar car, but the friend was not in it. This saddened one, for it spoke of those happy hours and merry stories and a medicine of laughter and love which had often brought healing to my father. Did I hear rightly, or was it but an echo in the heart? for a weak but merry voice said, 'Hurrah! here's the car!' The friend was at this time in the West Indies, and on the day that my father joined the Ever-living he was painting a glorious sunset. The picture stands before me now, and below are the words, 'St. Kitts, sunset, June 7, 1912.' The colours are of the deepest and most varied hues; but that same day gave me the vision of a more wondrous purple, red and golden—for I saw then my father's sunset—or, to be more correct—sunrise! For he speaks of dawn

rather than close of day: of Life rather than Death: of an abiding presence rather than of a separated friend.

My story draws to a close, and I know all too well that I have only given a suggestion of what John Denholm Brash was. There is that in him which defies analysis: there is that indescribable something which is the secret of every man of God. He once picked up a Bible on a bookstall in Edgware Road, London, and on opening it he found that 1 Cor. xiii. was torn out. He often used that as an illustration of the supreme tragedy of the religious life. Now my father would not have torn any page out of the Bible; but if he had, he would have said farewell first to the imprecatory Psalms, and in every gap he would have placed Paul's Hymn of Love. It was a daring thing to do, but there was an appropriateness in the act of a class-leader of his old mission, who, in the week after his triumph, read 1 Cor. xiii. to her members, and for 'love' ventured a new and conjectural reading—J.D.B. It certainly was nearer the truth than many suggested by the biblical scholar. She dared to do it, and rightly. I have done it myself just now, and have found in this way the best picture of him. If you want to see his truest portrait, step into the picture-gallery of 1 Cor. xiii., and there you will see him portrayed in the blazing and dazzling colours

of Love. He often spoke of 'the life behind the life'; and his prayers and sighs for a clean heart, his reading of the Book, and his chanting of the hymns tell us that of this he had a tender care. It was this hidden life which gave a fragrance to all that he did and said; it was this which was the rose behind the arras.

On his grave there is a twig of heather; and it is well that it should be there; but it is better for us to know that in the hearts of those who loved him most there is that mystic and deathless white heather in full bloom which speaks of what he was and is. We have often said, with an emphasis on the first line and with no need of question in the second:

> Better lo'ed ye canna be,
> Will ye no come back again?

He has come back again. He taught us this truth; but even if he had not left us this legacy, the children of his neighbourhood would have told us. For when my father was confined to his room towards the end of the winter, a little girl said to her mother: 'He will be "out" again in the spring; he always comes out with the flowers.' Thus he comes back to us. Life can never be the same again; it must be wider, for another world has swum into our ken.

All this is true; yet, although we have found a new world, one fair isle of life has been submerged by a sea of sorrow. There

is a strange poignancy in the loss that comes in the passing of one who means so much to us. One yearns for his gaiety, his flashes of merriment, and the way in which he was 'wont to set the table on a roar.' His quaint little ways and his big tendernesses, his comical wink, his merry laugh, and his voice which was made so musical by love, are gone—and oh, the difference to us!

Nothing can separate our spirits from the love of one so tender and great. For my father was, in the highest sense of the word, great. In vision, in an indifference to the trivial, in a fiery intolerance of injustice, in a burning love for all, and in the spirit of wonder and adventure, which were always with him, he was great.

'Who are the great? Are they not the few men, and women, and children on the earth who greatly love?' Amongst these we can count my father. Those who loved and knew him best will see him standing as a man and as a child among those who greatly love.

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